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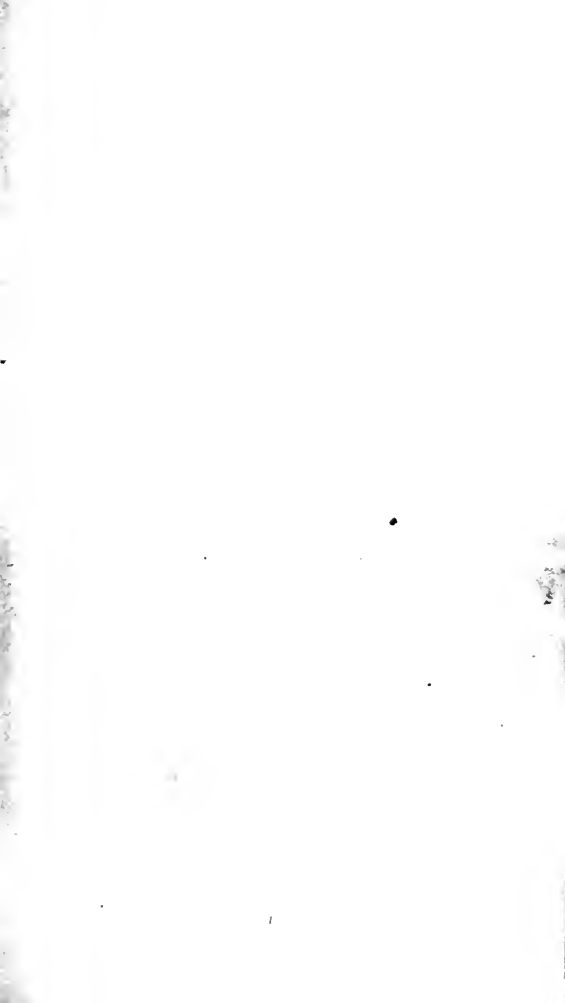
BUNYAN'S
GRACE ABOUNDING
TO THE
CHIEF OF SINNERS:
HEART'S EASE IN HEART TROUBLE:
THE
WORLD TO COME,
OR
VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL
AND THE
BARREN FIG TREE.



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JOHN DUNN

1681-1741

GRACE ABOUNDING

TO

THE CHIEF OF SINNERS,

IN A

FAITHFUL ACCOUNT OF THE LIFE AND DEATH

OF

JOHN BUNYAN:

OR,

A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY
OF GOD IN CHRIST TO HIM;

NAMELY,

In his taking him out of the dunghill, and converting of
him to the faith of his blessed Son Jesus Christ.

Here is particularly showed,

WHAT SIGHT OF, AND WHAT TROUBLE HE HAD FOR, SIN;
AND ALSO, WHAT VARIOUS TEMPTATIONS HE HATH
MET WITH: AND HOW GOD HATH CARRIED
HIM THROUGH THEM ALL.

Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare
what he hath done for my soul.—Psal. lxi. 16



PREFACE ;

OR

BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE PUBLISHING THIS WORK

Written by the Author thereof,

AND DEDICATED

TO THOSE WHOM GOD HATH COUNTED HIM WORTHY
TO BEGET TO FAITH, BY HIS MINISTRY IN THE
WORD.

CHILDREN, grace be with you. Amen. I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up that I cannot perform that duty, that from God doth lie upon me to you ward, for your farther edifying and building up in faith and holiness, &c. yet, that you may see my soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare, I now once again, as before from the top of Shemir and Hermon, so now from the 'lion's den,' from the 'mountain of the leopards,' (Song iv. 8.) do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into 'the desired haven.'

I thank God upon every remembrance of you ; and rejoice even while I stick between the teeth of the lions in the wilderness, that the grace, and mercy, and knowledge of Christ our Saviour, which God hath bestowed upon you, with abundance of faith and love ; your hungerings and thirstings after further acquaintance with the Father, in the Son, your tenderness of heart, your troubling at sin, your sober and holy deportment also, before both God and men, is a great refreshment to me ; 'for you are my glory and joy,' 1 Thess. ii. 20.

I have sent you here enclosed, 'a drop of that honey that I have taken out of the carcass of a lion,'

Judg. xiv. 5—8. I have eaten thereof myself, and am much refreshed thereby. (Temptations, when we meet them at first, are as the lion that roared upon Samson; but if we overcome them the next time we see them we shall find a nest of honey within them.) The Philistines understood me not. It is something of a relation of the work of God upon my soul, even from the very first, till now, wherein you may perceive my castings down and risings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole. It is written in the Scripture, Isaiah xxxviii. 19, 'The father to the children shall make known the truth of God.' Yea, it was for this reason I lay so long at Sinai, Lev. iv. 10, 11, to see the fire, and the cloud, and the darkness, 'that I might fear the Lord all the days of my life upon earth, and tell of his wondrous works to my children,' Psal. lxxviii. 3—5.

Moses, Numb. xxxiii. 1, 2, writ of the journeyings of the children of Israel, from Egypt to the land of Canaan, and commanded also, that they did remember their forty years' travel in the wilderness. 'Thou shalt remember all the ways which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, and to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandment or no,' Deut. viii. 2, 3. Wherefore this I have endeavoured to do; and not only so, but to publish it also; that, if God will, others may be put in remembrance of what he hath done for their souls, by reading his work upon me.

It is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of grace with their souls. 'It is a night to be much observed to the Lord, for bringing them out of the land of Egypt. This is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel, in their generation,' Exod. xii. 42. 'My God,' saith David, Psal. xliii. 5, 'my soul is cast down within me; but I will remember thee, from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.' He remembered also the lion

and the bear, when he went to fight with the giant of Gath, 1 Sam. xvii. 36, 37.

It was Paul's accustomed manner, Acts xxii. and that when tried for his life, Acts xxiv. even to open before his judges the manner of his conversion: he would think of that day, and that hour, in which he did first meet with grace: for he found it supported him. When God had brought the children of Israel out of the Red Sea, far into the wilderness, yet they must turn quite about thither again, to remember the drowning of their enemies there, Num. xiv. 25; for though they sang his praise before, yet they soon forgot his works, Psal. cxvi. 11, 12.

In this discourse of mine, you may see much; much, I say, of the grace of God toward me: I thank God, I can count it much, for it was above my sins and Satan's temptations too. I can remember my fears, and doubts, and sad months, with comfort; they are as the head of Goliath in my hand. There was nothing to David like Goliath's sword, even that sword which should have been sheathed in his bowels; for the very sight and remembrance of that, did preach forth God's deliverance to him. Oh! the remembrance of my great sins, of my great temptations, and of my great fear of perishing for ever! They bring afresh into my mind the remembrance of my great help, my great supports from Heaven, and the great grace that God extended to such a wretch as I.

My dear children, call to mind the former days, and years of ancient times: Remember, also, your songs in the night, and commune with your own heart, Psal. lxxiii. 5—12. Yea, look diligently, and leave no corner therein unsearched, for that treasure hid, even the treasure of your first and second experience of the grace of God toward you. Remember, I say, the word that first laid hold upon you: remember your terrors of conscience, and fear of death and hell: remember also, your tears and prayers to God; yea, how you sighed under every hedge of mercy. Have you never a hill Mizar to remember? Have you forgot the close, the milk

house, the stable, the barn, and the like, where God did visit your souls? Remember also, the word, the word, I say, upon which the Lord hath caused you to hope: if you have sinned against light, if you are tempted to blaspheme, if you are drowned in despair, if you think God fights against you, or if Heaven is hid from your eyes, remember it was thus with your father; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.

I could have enlarged much in this my discourse, of my temptations and troubles for sin; as also of the merciful kindness and working of God with my soul; I could also have stepped into a style much higher than this, in which I have here discoursed, and could have adorned all things more than here I have seemed to do; but I dare not: God did not play in tempting of me; neither did I play, when I sunk as into a bottomless pit, when the pangs of hell caught hold upon me; wherefore I may not play in relating of them, but be plain and simple, and lay down the thing as it was. He that liketh it, let him receive it; and he that doeth not, let him produce a better. Farewell.

My Dear Children,

The milk and honey is beyond this wilderness. God be merciful to you, and grant that you be not slothful to go in to possess the land.

JOHN BUNYAN.

GRACE ABOUNDING

TO

THE CHIEF OF SINNERS;

OR,

A BRIEF RELATION OF THE EXCEEDING MERCY OF GOD
IN CHRIST, TO HIS POOR SERVANT,

JOHN BUNYAN.

IN this my relation of the merciful working of God upon my soul, it will not be amiss, if, in the first place, I do, in a few words, give you a hint of my pedigree and manner of bringing up; that thereby the goodness and bounty of God toward me may be the more advanced and magnified before the sons of men.

2. For my descent then, it was, as is well known by many, of a low and inconsiderable generation; my father's house being of that rank that is the meanest and most despised of all the families of the land. Wherefore I have not here, as others, to boast of noble blood, and of any high born state, according to the flesh; though, all things considered, I magnify the heavenly majesty, for that by this door he brought me into the world, to partake of the grace and life that is in Christ by the gospel.

3. But notwithstanding the meanness and inconsiderableness of my parents, it pleased God to put into their hearts to put me to school, to learn me both to read and write; the which I also attained, according to the rate of other poor men's children; though, to my shame, I confess, I did soon lose that I had learned, even almost utterly, and that long before the Lord did work his gracious work of conversion upon my soul.

4. As for my own natural life, for the time that I was without God in the world, it was indeed according to the course of this world, and the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, Eph. ii. 2, 3. It was my delight to be taken captive by the devil at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 26, being filled with all unrighteousness; the which did also so strongly work, both in my heart and life, that I had but few equals, both for cursing, swearing, lying, and blaspheming the holy name of God.

5. Yea, so settled and rooted was I in these things, that they became as a second nature to me; the which, as I have also with soberness considered since, did so offend the Lord, that even in my childhood he did scare and terrify me with fearful dreams and visions. For often, after I had spent this and the other day in sin, I have been greatly afflicted, while asleep, with the apprehensions of devils and wicked spirits, who, as I then thought, laboured to draw me away with them, of which I could never be rid.

6. Also I should, at these years, be greatly troubled with the thoughts of the fearful torments of hell fire: still fearing that it would be my lot to be found at last among those devils and hellish fiends, who are there bound down with the chains and bonds of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

7. These things, I say, when I was but a child, but nine or ten years old, did so distress my soul, that then, in the midst of my many sports and childish vanities, amidst my vain companions, I was often much cast down, and afflicted in my mind therewith, yet could I not let go my sins: Yea, I was also then so overcome with despair of life and heaven, that I should often wish, either that there had been no hell, or that I had been a devil, supposing they were only tormentors; that if it must needs be that I went thither, I might be rather a tormentor, than be tormented myself.

8. A while after these terrible dreams did leave me, which also I soon forgot; for my pleasures did quickly cut off the remembrance of them, as if they had never been; wherefore with more greediness, according to the strength of nature, I did still let loose the reins of my lust, and delighted in all transgressions against the law of God: so that until I came to the state of marriage, I was the very ringleader in all manner of vice and ungodliness.

9. Yea, such prevalency had the lusts of the flesh on my poor soul, that had not a miracle of precious grace prevented, I had not only perished by the stroke of eternal justice, but also laid myself open to the stroke of those laws which bring some to disgrace and shame before the face of the world.

10. In those days the thoughts of religion were very grievous to me; I could neither endure it myself, nor that any other should; so that when I have seen some read in those books that concerned Christian piety, it would be as it were a prison to me. Then I said unto God, 'Depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways,' Job, xx. 14, 15. I was now void of all good consideration, heaven and hell were both out of sight and mind; and as for saving and damning, they were least in my thoughts. 'O Lord thou knowest my life, and my ways are not hid from thee.'

11. But this I well remember, that though I could myself sin with the greatest delight and ease, yet even then, if I had at any time seen wicked things, by those who professed goodness, it would make my spirit tremble. As once above all the rest, when I was in the height of vanity, yet hearing one to swear that was reckoned for a religious man, it had so great a stroke upon my spirit that it made my heart ache.

12. But God did not utterly leave me, but following me still, not with convictions; but judgments, mixed with mercy. For once I fell into a

creek of the sea, and hardly escaped drowning. Another time I fell out of a boat into Bedford river, but mercy yet preserved me: besides, another time, being in the field, with my companions, it chanced that an adder passed over the highway, so I having a stick, struck her over the back; and having stunned her, I forced open her mouth with my stick, and plucked her sting out with my fingers; by which act, had not God been merciful to me, I might, by my desperateness, have brought myself to my end.

13. This also I have taken notice of with thanksgiving: When I was a soldier, I, with others, were drawn out to go to such a place to besiege it; but when I was just ready to go, one of the company desired to go in my room; to which, when I had consented, he took my place, and coming to the siege, as he stood sentinel, he was shot in the head with a musket bullet and died.

14. Here, as I said, were judgments and mercy, but neither of them did awaken my soul to righteousness; wherefore I sinned still, and grew more and more rebellious against God, and careless of my own salvation.

15. Presently after this, I changed my condition into a married state, and my mercy was to light upon a wife whose father and mother were counted godly: this woman and I, though we came together as poor as poor might be, (not having so much household stuff as a dish or spoon betwixt us both,) yet this she had for her part, 'The Plain Man's Pathway to Heaven;' and 'the Practice of Piety;' which her father had left her when he died. In these two books I sometimes read, wherein I found some things that were somewhat pleasing to me; (but all this while I met with no conviction.) She also often would tell me what a godly man her father was, and how he would reprove and correct vice, both in his house, and among his neighbours; and what a strict and holy life he lived in his days, both in word and deed.

16. Wherefore these books, though they did not reach my heart, to awaken it about my sad and sinful state, yet they did beget within me some desires to reform my vicious life, and fall in very eagerly with the religion of the times; to wit, to go to church twice a day and there very devoutly both say and sing, as others did, yet retaining my wicked life; but withal was so overrun with the spirit of superstition, that I adored, and that with great devotion, even all things (both the high-place, priest, clerk, vestment, service, and what else) belonging to the church; counting all things holy that were therein contained, and especially the priest and clerk most happy, and without doubt, greatly blessed, because they were the servants, as I then thought, of God, and were principal in the holy temple, to do his work therein.

17. This conceit grew so strong upon my spirit, that had I but seen a priest, (though never so sordid and debauched in his life,) I should find my spirit fall under him, reverence him, and knit unto him; yea, I thought, for the love I did bear unto them, (supposing they were the ministers of God,) I could have laid down at their feet, and have been trampled upon by them; their name, their garb, and work, did so intoxicate and bewitch me.

18. After I had been thus for some considerable time, another thought came into my mind; and that was, Whether we were of the Israelites, or no? For finding in the scripture that they were once the peculiar people of God, thought I, if I were one of this race, my soul must needs be happy. Now again, I found within me a great longing to be resolved about this question, but could not tell how I should: at last I asked my father of it; who told me, No, we were not. Wherefore then I fell in my spirit, as to the hope of that, and so remained.

19. But all this while, I was not sensible of the danger and evil of sin; I was kept from consi-

dering that sin would damn me, what religion soever I followed, unless I was found in Christ: nay, I never thought whether there was such a one, or no. Thus man, while blind, doth wander, for he knoweth not the way to the city of God, Eccles. x. 15.

20. But one day, (amongst all the sermons our parson made,) his subject was to treat of the sabbath day, and of the evil of breaking that, either with labour, sports, or otherwise; wherefore I fell in my conscience under his sermon, thinking and believing that he made that sermon on purpose to show me my evil doing. And at that time I felt what guilt was, though never before, that I can remember; but then I was for the present greatly loaded therewith, and so went home, when the sermon was ended, with a great burden upon my spirit.

21. This, for that instant, did imbitter my former pleasures to me; but hold, it lasted not, for before I had well dined, the trouble began to go off my mind, and my heart returned to its old course; but oh! how glad was I, that this trouble was gone from me, and that the fire was put out, that I might sin again without control! Wherefore, when I had satisfied nature with my food, I shook the sermon out of my mind, and to my old custom of sports and gaming I returned with great delight.

22. But the same day, as I was in the midst of a game of cat, and having struck it one blow from the hole, just as I was about to strike it the second time, a voice did suddenly dart from heaven into my soul, which said, 'Wilt thou leave thy sins and go to heaven, or have thy sins and go to hell?' At this I was put to an exceeding maze; wherefore, leaving my cat upon the ground, I looked up to heaven, and was, as if I had, with the eyes of my understanding, seen the Lord Jesus look down upon me, as being very hotly displeased with me, and as if he did severely threaten me with some grievous punishment for those and other ungodly practices.

23. I had no sooner thus conceived in my mind, but suddenly this conclusion fastened on my spirit, (for the former hint did set my sins again before my face,) that I had been a great and grievous sinner, and that it was now too late for me to look after heaven; for Christ would not forgive me nor pardon my transgressions. Then while I was thinking of it, and fearing lest it should be so, I felt my heart sink in despair, concluding it was too late; and therefore I resolved in my mind to go on in sin; For, thought I, if the case be thus, my state is surely miserable; miserable if I leave my sins, and but miserable if I follow them: I can but be damned; and if I must be so, I had as good be damned for many sins, as be damned for few.

24. Thus I stood in the midst of my play, before all that then were present; but yet I told them nothing: but, I say, having made this conclusion, I returned desperately to my sport again; and I well remember, that presently this kind of despair did so possess my soul, that I was persuaded I could never attain to other comfort than what I should get in sin; for heaven was gone already, so that on that I must not think; wherefore I found within me great desire to take my fill of sin, that I might taste the sweetness of it: and I made as much haste as I could to fill my belly with its delicacies, lest I should die before I had my desires; for that I feared greatly. In these things, I protest before God, I lie not, neither do I frame this sort of speech; these were really, strongly, and with all my heart, my desires: the good Lord, whose mercy is unsearchable, forgive my transgressions.

25. And I am very confident, that this temptation of the devil is more usual among poor creatures than many are aware of, yet they continually have a secret conclusion within them, that there are no hopes for them; for they have loved sins, therefore after them they will go, Jer. ii. 25. xviii. 12.

26. Now therefore I went on in sin, still grudging that I could not be satisfied with it as I would. This did continue with me about a month, or more; but one day, as I was standing at a neighbour's shop window, and there cursing and swearing after my wonted manner, there sat within the woman of the house, who heard me; and though she was a very loose and ungodly wretch, yet protested that I swore and cursed at that most fearful rate, that she was made to tremble to hear me; and told me farther, that I was the ungodliest fellow for swearing, that she ever heard in all her life; and that I, by thus doing, was able to spoil all the youth in the whole town, if they came but in my company.

27. At this reproof I was silenced, and put to secret shame; and that too, as I thought, before the God of heaven; wherefore, while I stood there, hanging down my head, I wished that I might be a little child again, that my father might learn me to speak without this wicked way of swearing; for, thought I, I am so accustomed to it, that it is in vain to think of a reformation, for that could never be.

28. But how it came to pass I know not, I did from this time forward so leave my swearing, that it was a great wonder to myself to observe it; and whereas, before I knew not how to speak unless I put an oath before, and another behind, to make my words have authority; now I could, without it, speak better, and with more pleasantness than ever I could before. All this while I knew not Jesus Christ, neither did leave my sports and plays.

29. But quickly after this, I fell into company with one poor man that made profession of religion; who, as I then thought, did talk pleasantly of the Scriptures, and of religion; wherefore liking what he said, I betook me to my Bible, and began to take great pleasure in reading, especially with the historical part thereof; for as for Paul's epistles, and such like scriptures, I could not away with them, being as yet ignorant either of my nature, or of the want and worth of Jesus Christ to save us.

30. Wherefore I fell to some outward reformation both in my words and life, and did set the commandments before me for my way to heaven; which commandments I also did strive to keep, and, as I thought, did keep them pretty well sometimes, and then I should have comfort; yet now and then should break one, and so afflict my conscience; but, then I should repent, and say, I was sorry for it, and promise God to do better next time, and there got help again; for then I thought I pleased God as well as any man in England.

31. Thus I continued about a year; all which time our neighbours did take me to be a very godly and religious man, and did marvel much to see such great alteration in my life and manners; and indeed so it was, though I knew not Christ, nor grace, nor faith, nor hope; for, as I have since seen, had I then died, my state had been most fearful.

32. But, I say, my neighbours were amazed at this my great conversion, from prodigious profaneness, to something like a moral life, and sober man. Now therefore they began to praise, to commend, and to speak well of me, both to my face and behind my back. Now I was, as they said, become godly; now I was become a right honest man. But oh! when I understood those were their words and opinions of me, it pleased me mighty well; for though as yet I was nothing but a poor painted hypocrite, yet I loved to be talked of as one that was truly godly. I was proud of my godliness, and indeed, I did all I did, either to be seen of, or well spoken of by men: and thus I continued for about a twelvemonth or more.

33. Now you must know, that before this I had taken much delight in ringing, but my conscience beginning to be tender, I thought such practice was but vain, and therefore forced myself to leave it; yet my mind hankered; wherefore I would go to the steeple house, and look on, though I durst not ring: but I thought this did not become religion; neither; yet I forced myself and would look on still. But quickly after, I began to think, 'How if

one of the bells should fall?' Then I chose to stand under a main beam, that lay overthwart the steeple, from side to side, thinking here I might stand sure: but then I thought again, should the bell fall with a swing, it might first hit the wall, and then rebounding upon me, might kill me for all this beam. This made me stand in the steeple door; and now thought I, I am safe enough; for if a bell should then fall, I can slip out behind these thick walls, and so be preserved notwithstanding.

34. So after this I would yet go to see them ring, but would not go any farther than the steeple door.' but then it came in my head, 'How if the steeple itself should fall?' And this thought (it may, for aught I know, when I stood and looked on) did continually so shake my mind, that I durst not stand at the steeple door any longer, but was forced to flee, for fear the steeple should fall upon my head.

35. Another thing was my dancing; I was a full year before I could quite leave that. But all this while when I thought I kept that or this commandment, or did by word or deed, any thing I thought was good, I had great peace in my conscience; and would think with myself, God cannot choose but be now pleased with me; yea, to relate it in my own way, I thought no man in England could please God better than I.

36. But, poor wretch as I was, I was all this while ignorant of Jesus Christ, and going about to establish my own righteousness; and had perished therein, had not God, in his mercy, showed me more of my state by nature.

37. But upon a day, the good providence of God called me to Bedford, to work at my calling; and in one of the streets of that town I came where there were three or four poor women sitting at a door, in the sun, talking about the things of God; and being now willing to hear their discourse, I drew near to hear what they said; for I was now a brisk talker myself in the matters of religion; but they were far above my reach. Their talk was about a new birth, the work of God in their hearts,

as also how they were convinced of their miserable state by nature: they talked how God had visited their souls with his love in the Lord Jesus, and with what words and promises they have been refreshed, comforted, and supported against the temptations of the devil: moreover, they reasoned of the suggestions and temptations of Satan in particular; and told to each other, by what means they had been afflicted; and how they were borne up under his assaults. They also discoursed of their own wretchedness of heart, and of their unbelief; and did contemn, slight, and abhor their own righteousness, as filthy, and insufficient to do them any good.

38. And methought they spake with such pleasantness of Scripture language, and with such appearance of grace in all they said, that they were to me as if they had found a new world; as if they were 'people that dwelt alone, and were not to be reckoned among their neighbours,' Numb. xxiii. 9.

39. At this I felt my own heart begin to shake; for I saw that in all my thoughts about religion and salvation, the new birth did never enter into my mind; neither knew I the comfort of the word and promise, nor the deceitfulness and treachery of my own wicked heart. As for secret thoughts, I took no notice of them; neither did I understand what Satan's temptations were, nor how they were to be withstood and resisted, &c.

40. Thus, therefore, when I had heard and considered what they said, I left them, and went about my employment again; but my heart would tarry with them, for I was greatly affected with their words, because by them I was convinced that I wanted the true tokens of a truly godly man, and also because I was convinced of the happy and blessed condition of him that was such a one.

41. Therefore I would often make it my business, to be going again and again into the company of these poor people, for I could not stay away; and the more I went among them, the

more I did question my condition: and, as I still do remember, presently I found two things within me, at which I did sometimes marvel; especially considering what a blind, ignorant, sordid, and ungodly wretch but just before I was: the one was a very great softness and tenderness of heart, which caused me to fall under the conviction of what by Scripture they asserted; and the other was a bending in my mind, a continual meditating on it, and on all other good things, which at that time I heard or read of.

42. By these things my mind was so turned, that it lay, like a horse-leech at the vein, still crying out, 'Give, give,' Prov. xxx. 15, which was so fixed on eternity, and on the things about the kingdom of heaven, (that is, so far as I knew, though as yet, God knows, I knew but little) that neither pleasure nor profits, nor persuasions, nor threats, could make it let go its hold; and though I speak it with shame, yet it is a certain truth, it would then have been as difficult for me to have taken my mind from heaven to earth, as I have found it often since to get it again from earth to heaven.

43. One thing I may not omit: There was a young man in our town, to whom my heart before was knit more than to any other; but he being a most wicked creature for cursing and swearing, and whoring, I now shook him off, and forsook his company; but about a quarter of a year after I had left him, I met him in a certain lane, and asked him how he did: He, after his old swearing and mad way, answered 'he was well.' 'But Harry,' said I, 'Why do you curse and swear thus? What will become of you if you die in this condition?' He answered me in a great chafe, 'What would the devil do for company, if it was not for such as I am.'

44. About this time I met with some ranters' books, which were highly in esteem by several old professors: some of these I read, but was not able to make any judgment about them;

wherefore as I read in them, and thought upon them, seeing myself unable to judge, I would betake myself to hearty prayer in this manner; 'O Lord, I am a fool, and not able to know the truth from error: Lord, leave me not in my own blindness, either to approve of or condemn this doctrine; if it be of God, let me not despise it; if it be of the devil, let me not embrace it. Lord, I lay my soul in this matter, only at thy feet; let me not be deceived, I humbly beseech thee.' I had one religious intimate companion all this while, and that was the poor man I spoke of before; but about this time, he also turned a most devilish ranter, and gave himself up to all manner of filthiness, especially uncleanness: he would also deny that there was a God, an angel, or spirit, and would laugh at all exhortations to sobriety. When I laboured to rebuke his wickedness, he would laugh the more; and pretended that he had gone through all religions, and could never hit upon the right till now. Wherefore abominating those cursed principles, I left his company forthwith, and became to him as great a stranger as I had been before a familiar.

45. Neither was this man only a temptation to me, but my calling lying in the country, I happened to come into several people's company, who though strict in religion formerly, yet were also drawn away by these ranters. These would also talk with me of their ways, and condemn me as illegal and dark; pretending that they only had attained to perfection, that could do what they would, and not sin. Oh! these temptations were suitable to my flesh, I being but a young man, and my nature in its prime; but God, who had, as I hope, designed me for better things, kept me in the fear of his name, and did not suffer me to accept such cursed principles. And blessed be God, who put it into my heart to cry to him, to be kept and directed, still distrusting mine own wisdom; for I have since seen even the effects of that prayer, in his preserving me, not only

from ranting errors, but from those also that have sprung up since. The Bible was precious to me in those days.

46 And now I began to look into the Bible with new eyes; and especially the Epistles of the Apostle St. Paul were sweet and pleasant to me; and then I was never out of the Bible, either by reading or meditation; still crying out to God, that I might know the truth and way to heaven and glory.

47. And as I went on and read, I hit upon that passage, 'To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; and to another faith,' &c. 1 Cor. xii. And though, as I have since seen, that by this Scripture the Holy Ghost intends, in special, things extraordinary, yet on me it did then fasten with conviction, that I did want things ordinary, even that understanding and wisdom that other Christians had. On this word I mused, and could not tell what to do. Especially this word *faith* put me to it, for I could not help it, but sometimes must question, whether I had any faith or no; but I was loath to conclude I had no faith; for if I do so, thought I, then I shall count myself a very castaway indeed.

48. Now, said I with myself, though I am an ignorant sot, and want those blessed gifts of knowledge and understanding that other people have, yet at a ven ure I will conclude I am not altogether faithless, though I know not what faith is; for it was shown me, and that too (as I have seen since) by Satan, that those who conclude themselves in a faithless state, have neither rest nor quiet in their souls; and was loath to fall quite into despair.

49. Wherefore, by this suggestion, I was made afraid to see my want of faith, but God would not suffer me thus to destroy my soul, but did, against this my sad and blind conclusion, create within me such suppositions that I could not rest content until I did come to some certain

knowledge whether I had faith or not; this always running in my mind, 'But how if you want faith indeed? But how can you tell you have faith?' And besides, I saw for certain if I had not, I was sure to perish for ever.

50. So that though I endeavoured at the first to look over the business of *faith*, yet in a little time, I better considering the matter, was willing to put myself upon the trial whether I had *faith* or no. But alas, poor wretch; so ignorant was I, that I knew no more how to do it than I know how to begin and accomplish that rare and curious piece of art which I never yet saw or considered.

51. Wherefore while I was thus considering, (for you must know, that as yet I had not in this matter broken my mind to any one, only did hear and consider,) the tempter came in with his delusion, 'That there was no way for me to know I had faith, but by trying to work some miracles;' urging those Scriptures that seem to enforce and strengthen his temptation. Nay, one day as I was between Elstow and Bedford, the temptation was hot upon me, to try if I had *faith*, by doing some miracle; which miracle at this time was this, I must say to the puddles that were in the horse pads, be dry; and to the dry places, be you puddles: and truly one time I was going to say so indeed; but just as I was about to speak, this thought came into my mind: 'but go under yonder hedge, and pray first that God would make you able.' But when I had concluded to pray, this came hot upon me; that if I prayed, and came again, and tried to do it, and yet did nothing notwithstanding, then to be sure I had no *faith*, but was a castaway and lost. Nay, thought I, if it be so, I will not try yet, but will stay a little longer.

52. So I continued at a great loss; for I thought if they only had *faith* which could do so wonderful things, then I concluded, that I neither had it, nor yet were ever like to have it. Thus

I was tossed betwixt the devil and my own ignorance, and so perplexed that I could not tell what to do.

53. About this time, the state of happiness of these poor people at Bedford was thus, in a kind of a vision, presented to me I saw, as if they were on the sunny side of some high mountain, there refreshing themselves with the pleasant beams of the sun, while I was shivering and shrinking in the cold, afflicted with frost, snow, and dark clouds: methought also betwixt me and them, I saw a wall that did compass about this mountain: now through this wall my soul did greatly desire to pass; concluding that if I could I would there also comfort myself with the heat of their sun.

54. About this wall I bethought myself to go again and again, still prying as I went, to see if I could find some way or passage by which I might enter therein: but none could I find for some time: at the last I saw, as it were, a narrow gap, like a little doorway in the wall, through which I attempted to pass: now the passage being very strait and narrow, I made many offers to get in, but all in vain; at last with great striving, methought I at first did get in my head, and after that, by a sideling striving, my shoulders, and my whole body; then I was exceeding glad, and went and sat down in the midst of them, and so was comforted with the light and heat of their sun.

55. Now this mountain and wall was thus made out to me: the mountain signified the church of the living God; the sun that shone thereon, the shining of his merciful face on them that were therein; the wall I thought was the world, that did make separation between the Christians and the world; and the gap which was in the wall, I thought was Jesus Christ, who was the way to God the Father, John, xiv. 6. Matt. vii. 14. But as the passage was wonderful narrow, even so narrow that I could not but

with great difficulty enter in thereat, it showed me, that none could enter into life, but these that were in downright earnest, and left the wicked world behind them; for here was only room for body and soul, but not for body and soul, and sin.

56. This resemblance abode upon my spirit many days; all which time I saw myself in a forlorn and sad condition, but yet was provoked to vehement hunger and desire to be one of that number that did sit in the sunshine: Now also would I pray wherever I was; whether at home or abroad; in house or field; and would also often, with lifting up of heart, sing that of the fifty-first psalm, 'O Lord consider my distress;' for as yet I knew not where I was.

57. Neither as yet could I attain to any comfortable persuasion that I had faith in Christ; but instead, I began to find my soul to be assaulted with fresh doubts about my future happiness; especially with such as these, 'Whether I was elected? But how if the day of grace should now be past and gone?'

58. By these two temptations I was very much afflicted and disquieted; sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other of them. And first, to speak of that about my questioning my election, I found, that though I was in a flame to find the way to heaven and glory, and nothing could beat me off from this, yet this question did so discourage me, that I was, especially sometimes, as if the very strength of my body had been taken away by the force and power thereof. This Scripture did also seem to me to trample upon all my desires; 'It is neither in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth; but in God that showeth mercy.' Rom. ix. 16.

59. With this Scripture I could not tell what to do; for I evidently saw, that unless God had voluntarily chosen me to be a vessel of mercy, though I should desire, and long, and labour until my heart did break, no good could come of it. Therefore this would stick with me, 'How can

you tell that you are elected? and what if you should not? How then?

60. O Lord, thought I, what if I should not indeed! It may be you are not, said the tempter; it may be so indeed, thought I. Why then, said Satan, you had as good leave off, and strive no farther; for if indeed you should not be elected and chosen of God, there is no hope of your being saved: 'For it is neither in him that willeth, nor in him that runneth; but in God that showeth mercy.'

61. By these things I was driven to my wit's end, not knowing what to say, or how to answer these temptations. Indeed, I little thought that Satan had thus assaulted me, but that rather it was my own prudence thus to start the question, for that the elect only obtained eternal life, that I without scruple did heartily close withal; but that myself was one of them, there lay the question.

62. Thus therefore, for several days, I was greatly perplexed, and as often ready to sink with faintness in my mind: but one day, after I had been many weeks oppressed and cast down therewith, as I was giving up the ghost of all my hopes of ever attaining life, that sentence fell with weight upon my spirit, 'Look at the generations of old, and see: did ever any trust in God, and were confounded?'

63. At which I was greatly encouraged in my soul; for thus, at that very instant, it was expounded to me: 'Begin at the beginning of Genesis, and read to the end of the Revelations, and see if you can find that there was ever any that trusted in the Lord, and was confounded. So coming home, I presently went to my Bible to see if I could find that saying, not doubting but to find it presently; for it was with such strength and comfort on my spirit, that I was as if it talked with me.

64. Well, I looked, but I found it not; only it abode upon me: then did I ask first this good man,

and then another, if they knew where it was, but they knew no such place. And this I wondered, that such a sentence should so suddenly, and with such comfort and strength, seize, and abide upon my heart; and yet that none could find it (for I doubted not but that it was in the Holy Scripture.)

65. Thus I continued above a year, and could not find the place; but at last, casting my eye upon the Apocrypha books, I found it in Ecclesiasticus, chap. ii. 16. This, at the first, did somewhat daunt me; because it was not in those texts that we call holy and canonical, yet, as this sentence was the sum and substance of many of the promises, it was my duty to take the comfort of it; and I bless God for that word, for it was of good to me. That word doth still oftentimes shine before my face.

66. After this, that other doubt did come with strength upon me, 'But how if the day of grace should be past and gone? How if you have overstood the time of mercy? Now I remember, that one day, as I was walking in the country, I was much in the thoughts of this, 'But how if the day of grace is past?' And to aggravate my trouble, the tempter presented to my mind those good people of Bedford, and suggested thus unto me, That these being converted already, they were all that God would save in those parts; and that I came too late, for these had got the blessing before I came.

67. Now I was in great distress, thinking in very deed that this might well be so; wherefore I went up and down bemoaning my sad condition; for standing off thus long, and spending so many years in sin, as I have done, still crying out, Oh! that I had turned sooner! Oh! that I had turned seven years ago! It made me also angry with myself, to think that I should have no more wit, but to trifle away my time, till my soul and heaven were lost.

68. But when I had been long vexed with this fear, and was scarce able to take one step more, just about the same place where I received my

other encouragement, these words broke in upon my mind, 'Compel them to come in, that my house may be filled; and there is room,' Luke, xiv. 22, 23. These words, 'And yet there is room,' were sweet words to me; for truly I thought, that when the Lord Jesus did speak these words, he then did think for me; and that he knowing that the time would come, that I should be afflicted with fear that there was no place left for me in his bosom, did before speak this word, and leave it upon record, that I might find help thereby against this vile temptation. This I then verily believed.

69. In the light and encouragement of this word, I went a pretty while; and the comfort was the more, when I thought that the Lord Jesus should speak those words on purpose for my sake; for I did think verily, that he did on purpose speak them to encourage me withal.

70. But I was not without my temptations to go back again; temptations I say, both from Satan, mine own heart, and carnal acquaintance; but I thank God these were outweighed by that sound sense of death, and of the day of judgment, which abode, as it were continually in my view: I would often also think on Nebuchadnezzar; of whom it is said, 'He had given him all the kingdoms of the earth,' Dan. v. 18, 19. Yet, thought I, if this great man had all his portion in this world, one hour in hell-fire would make him forget all. Which consideration was a great help to me.

71. I was almost made, about this time, to see something concerning the beasts that Moses counted clean and unclean: I thought those beasts were types of men; the clean, types of them that were the people of God; but the unclean, types of such as were the children of the wicked one. Now I read, that the clean beasts 'chewed the cud;' that is, thought I, they show us, we must feed upon the word of God: they also 'parted the hoof;' I thought that signified, we must part, if we would be saved, with the ways of ungodly men. And also, in further reading about them, I found, that though

we did chew the cud as the hare ; yet if we walked with claws, like a dog, or if we did part the hoof, like the swine, yet if we did not chew the cud, as the sheep, we are still, for all that, but unclean : For I thought the hare to be a type of those that talk of the word, yet walk in the ways of sin ; and that swine was like him that parted with his outward pollution, but still wanteth the word of faith, without which there could be no way of salvation, let a man be ever so devout, Deut. xiv. After this, I found by reading the word, that those that must be glorified with Christ in another world, ' must be called by him here ;' called to the partaking of a share in his word and righteousness, and to the comforts and first fruits of his Spirit, which do indeed prepare the soul for that rest, and the house of glory, which is in heaven above.

72. Here again I was at a very great stand, not knowing what to do, fearing I was not called ; for, thought I, if I be not called, what then can do me good ? But oh ! how I now love those words that spake of a Christian's calling ! as when the Lord said to one, ' Follow me ;' and to another, ' Come after me :' and oh, thought I, that he would say so to me too ; how gladly would I run after him !

73. I cannot now express with what longings and breathings in my soul, I cried to Christ to call me. Thus I continued for a time, all on a flame to be converted to Jesus Christ ; and did also see at that day, such glory in a converted state, that I could not be contented without a share therein. Gold ! could it have been gotten for gold, what would I have given for it ! Had I had a whole world, it had all gone ten thousand times over for this, that my soul might have been in a converted state.

74. How lovely now was every one in my eyes, that I thought to be converted men and women ! They shone, they walked like a people that carried the broad seal of heaven about them. But that which made me sick, was that of Christ in St.

Mark, 'He went up into a mountain, and called to him whom he would, and they came unto him.' Mark, ii. 13.

75. This Scripture made me faint, and fear, yet it kindled fire in my soul. That which made me fear was this; lest Christ should have no liking to me, for he called 'whom he would.' But oh! the glory that I saw in that condition did still so enrage my heart, that I could seldom read of any that Christ did call, but I presently wished, 'Would I had been in their clothes; would I had been born Peter; would I had been born John; or, would I had been by and had heard him when he called them, how would I have cried, O Lord, call me also! But oh! I feared he would not call me.'

76. And truly, the Lord let me go thus many months together, and showed me nothing; either that I was already, or should be called hereafter. But at last, after much time spent, and many groans to God, that word came in unto me, 'I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed, for the Lord dwelleth in Zion,' Joel, iii. 21. These words I thought were sent to encourage me to wait still upon God; and signified unto me, that if I were not already, yet time might come, I might be in truth converted unto Christ.

77. About this time I began to break my mind to those poor people in Bedford, and to tell them my condition, which when they had heard, they told Mr. Gifford of me, who himself also took occasion to talk with me, and was willing to be well persuaded of me, though I think from little grounds; but he invited me to his house, where I should hear him confer with others, about the dealings of God with their souls; from all which I still received no conviction, and from that time began to see something of the vanity, and inward wretchedness of my wicked heart. Now I evidently found, that lusts and corruptions put forth themselves within me, in wicked thoughts and desires, which I did not regard before; my desires also for heaven and life began to fail; I found also, that whereas before

my soul was full of longing after God, now it began to hanker after every foolish vanity; yea, my heart would not be moved to mind that which was good; it began to be careless, both of my soul and heaven, it would now continually hang back, both to and in every duty; and was as a clog on the leg of a bird, to hinder him from flying.

78. Nay, I thought, now I grow worse and worse; now I am further from conversion than ever I was before: wherefore I began to sink greatly in my soul, and began to entertain such discouragement in my heart, as laid me low as hell. I could not believe that Christ had a love for me; alas! I could neither hear him, nor see him, nor feel him, nor favour any of his things; I was driven as with a tempest, my heart would be unclean, and the Canaanites would dwell in the land.

79. Sometimes I would tell my condition to the people of God; when they would pity me, and would tell me of the promises; but they had as good have told me, that I must reach the sun with my finger, as have bidden me receive or rely upon the promises; all my sense and feeling was against me; and I saw I had a heart that would sin, and that lay under a law that would condemn.

80. These things have often made me think of the child which the father brought to Christ, 'who, while he was yet coming to him, was thrown down by the devil, and also so rent and torn by him, that he lay and wallowed, foaming,' Luke, ix. 42. Mark, ix. 20

81. Further, in these days, I would find my heart to shut itself up against the Lord, and against his holy word; I have found my unbelief to set, as it were, the shoulder to the door, to keep him out; and that too even then, when I have, with many a bitter sigh, cried, 'Good Lord, break it open: Lord, break these gates of brass, and cut these bars of iron in sunder! Psalm cvii. 16. Yet that word would sometimes create in my heart a peaceable pause: 'I girded thee, though thou hast not known me,' Isaiah xiv. 5.

82. But all this while, as to the act of sinning, I was never more tender than now ; my conscience now was sore, and would smart at every touch. I could not now tell how to speak my words for fear I should misplace them. Oh, how cautiously did I then go, in all I did or said ! I found myself as in a miry bog, that shook if I did but stir ; and was, as there, left both of God and Christ, and the Spirit, and all good things.

83. But I observed, though, I was such a great sinner before conversion, yet God never much charged the guilt of the sins of my ignorance upon me ; only he showed me, I was lost if I had not Christ, because I had been a sinner ; I saw that I wanted a perfect righteousness to present me without fault before God, and this righteousness was no where to be found, but in the person of Jesus Christ.

84. But my original and inward pollution ; that, that was my plague and affliction ; that I had the guilt of, to amazement ; by reason of that, I was more loathsome in mine own eyes than a toad, and thought I was so in God's eyes too : sin and corruption, I said, would as naturally bubble out of my heart, as water would out of a fountain ; I thought now, that every one had a better heart than I had ; I thought none but the devil himself could equalize me for inward wickedness and pollution of mind. I fell therefore at the sight of my own vileness deeply into despair ; for I concluded, that this condition that I was in, could not stand with a state of grace. Sure, thought I, I am forsaken of God ; sure I am given up to the devil, and to a reprobate mind : and thus I continued a long while, even for some years together.

85. While I was thus afflicted with the fears of my own damnation, there were two things would make me wonder : the one was when I saw old people hunting after the things of this life, as if they should live here always ; the other was, when I found professors much distressed and cast down, when they met with outward losses ; as of husband,

wife, or child, &c. Lord, thought I, what is seeking after carnal things, by some, and what grief in others for the loss of them! if they so much labour after, and shed so many tears for the things of this present life, how am I to be bemoaned, pitied, and prayed for! My soul is dying, my soul is damning. Were my soul but in a good condition, and were I but sure of it, ah! how rich should I esteem myself, though blessed but with bread and water! I should count these but small afflictions, and should bear them as little burdens. 'A wounded spirit who can bear!'

86. And though I was much troubled, and afflicted, with the sight and sense of my own wickedness, yet I was afraid to let this sight and sense go quite off my mind; for I found, that unless guilt of conscience was taken off the right way, that is, by the blood of Christ, a man grew rather worse for the loss of his trouble of mind: and if it was going off without it, (for the sense of sin would be sometimes as if it would die, and go quite away,) then I would also strive to fetch it upon my heart again, by bringing the punishment of sin in hell fire upon my spirit; and would cry, 'Lord let it not go off my heart, but by the right way, by the blood of Christ, and the application of thy mercy, through him, to my soul;' for that Scripture did lay much upon me, 'without shedding of blood there is no redemption,' Heb. ix. 22. And that which made me the more afraid of this was, because I had seen some, who, though when they were under the wounds of conscience would cry and pray; yet, feeling rather present ease for their trouble than pardon for their sin, cared not how they lost their guilt, so they got it out of their mind. Now having got it off the wrong way, it was not sanctified unto them; but they grew harder and blinder, and more wicked after their trouble. This made me afraid, and made me cry to God the more that it might not be so with me.

87. And now I was sorry that God had made me man, for I feared that I was a reprobate: I counted

man as unconverted, the most doleful of all creatures. Thus, being afflicted and tossed about my sad condition, I counted myself alone, and above the most of men unblessed.

88. Yea, I thought it impossible that ever I should attain to so much godliness of heart as to thank God that he had made me a man. Man, indeed, is the most noble by creation of all creatures in the visible world; but by sin he had made himself the most ignoble. The beasts, birds, fishes, &c. I blessed their condition; for they had not a sinful nature: they were not obnoxious to the wrath of God; they were not to go to hell-fire after death; I could therefore have rejoiced had my condition been as any of theirs.

89. In this condition I went a great while; but when the comforting time was come, I heard one preach a sermon on these words in the Song, (Song iv. 1,) 'Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair:' but at that time, he made these two words, *my love*, his chief and subject matter; from which, after he had a little opened the text, he observed these several conclusions: 1. That the church, and so every saved soul, is Christ's love, when loveless. 2. Christ's love without a cause. 3. Christ's love, which hath been hated of the world. 4. Christ's love, when under temptation and under destruction. 5. Christ's love from first to last.

90. But I got nothing by what he said at present; only when he came to the application of the fourth particular, this was the word he said: If it be so, that the saved soul is Christ's love, when under temptation and destruction; then, poor tempted soul, when thou art assaulted and afflicted with temptations, and the hidings of face, yet think on these two words, *my love*, still.

91. So, as I was going home, these words came again into my thoughts; and I well remember, as they came in, I said thus in my heart, 'What shall I get by thinking on these two words? This thought had no sooner passed through my heart, but these

words began thus to kindle in my spirit: 'Thou art my love, thou art my love,' twenty times together; and still as they ran in my mind, they waxed stronger and warmer, and began to make me look up; but being as yet between hope and fear, I still replied in my heart, 'But is it true? But is it true? At which that sentence fell upon me, 'He wist not that it was true, which was done unto him of the angel.' Acts, xii. 9.

92. Then I began to give place to the word, which with power did over and over make this joyful sound within my soul, 'Thou art my love, and nothing shall separate thee from my love.' And with that my heart was filled full of comfort and hope, and now I could believe that my sins would be forgiven me; yea, I was now so taken with the love and mercy of God, that I remember I could not tell how to contain till I got home: I thought I could have spoken of his love, and have told of his mercy to me, even to the very crows that sat upon the ploughed lands before me, had they been capable to have understood me: wherefore I said in my soul with much gladness, Well, would I had a pen and ink here, I would write this down before I go any further; for surely I will not forget this forty years hence. But, alas! within less than forty days I began to question all again; which made me begin to question all still.

93. Yet still at times I was helped to believe that it was a true manifestation of grace unto my soul, though I had lost much of the life and savour of it. Now, about a week or a fortnight after this, I was much followed by this Scripture, 'Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you,' Luke, xxii. 31; and sometimes it would sound so loud within me, that once, above all the rest, I turned my head over my shoulder, thinking verily that some man had, behind me, called me; being at a great distance, methought he called so loud. It came, as I have thought since, to have stirred me up to prayer and to watchfulness; it came to ac-

quaint me that a cloud and a storm was coming down upon me; but I understood it not.

94. Also, as I remember, that time that it called to me so loud, was the last time that it sounded in mine ears; but methinks I hear still with what a loud voice these words, 'Simon, Simon,' sounded in mine ears: and although that was not my name; yet it made me suddenly look behind me, believing that he that called so loud, meant me.

95. But so foolish was I, and ignorant, that I knew not the reason of this sound; (which as I did both see and feel soon after, was sent from heaven as an alarm, to awaken me to provide for what was coming;) only I would muse and wonder in my mind, to think what should be the reason of this Scripture: and that at this rate it should still be sounding and rattling in mine ears; but, as I said before, I soon after perceived the end of God therein.

96. For, about the space of a month after, a very great storm came down upon me, which handled me twenty times worse than all I had met with before; it came stealing upon me, now by one piece, then by another. First, all my comfort was taken from me; then, darkness seized upon me; after which, whole floods of blasphemies, both against God, Christ, and the Scriptures, was poured upon my spirit, to my great confusion and astonishment. These blasphemous thoughts were such as stirred up questions in me against the very being of a God, and his only beloved Son: as, whether there were, in truth, a God or Christ? and whether the Holy Scriptures were not rather a fable, and cunning story, than the holy and pure word of God!

97. The tempter would also much assault me with this, 'How can you tell but that the Turks had as good Scriptures to prove their Mahomet the Saviour, as we have to prove our Jesus? And could I think, that so many ten thousands, in so many countries and kingdoms, should be without the knowledge of the right way to heaven, (if there

were indeed a heaven;) and that we only, who live in a corner of the earth, should alone be blessed therewith? Every one doth think his own religion rightest, both Jews, and Moors, and Pagans; and how if all our faith, and Christ, and Scriptures, should be but a thinking so too.'

98. Sometimes I endeavoured to argue against these suggestions, and to set some of the sentences of blessed Paul against them; but, alas! I quickly felt such arguings as these would return again upon me: 'Though we made so great a matter of Paul, and of his words, yet how could I tell, but that in very deed, he being a subtle and cunning man, might give himself up to deceive with strong delusions; and also take the pains and travail to undo and destroy his fellows.'

99. These suggestions (with many others which at this time I may not, nor dare not utter, neither by word or pen) did make such a seizure upon my spirit, both with their number, continuance, and fiery force, that I felt nothing else but these from morning to night within me; and as though indeed there could be room for nothing else; and also concluded, that God had, in very wrath to my soul, given me up to them, to be carried away with them, as with a mighty whirlwind.

100. Only by the dislike that they gave unto my spirit, I felt there was something in me that refused to embrace them. But this consideration I then only had when God gave me leave to swallow my spittle; otherwise the noise, and strength, and force of these temptations would drown and overflow, and, as it were, bury all such thoughts, or the remembrance of any such thing. While I was in this temptation, I often found my mind suddenly put upon it to curse and swear, or to speak some grievous thing against God, or Christ his Son, and of the Scriptures.

101. Now I thought, surely I am possessed of the devil; at other times again, I thought I should be bereft of my wits; for, instead of lauding and magnifying God the Lord, with others, if I have

but heard him spoken of, presently some most horrible blasphemous thoughts or other would bolt out of my heart against him; so that whether I did think that God was, or again did think there were no such thing, no love, nor peace, nor gracious disposition could I feel within me.

102. These things did sink me into very deep despair, for I concluded, that such things could not possibly be found amongst them that loved God. I often did compare myself to the case of such a child whom some gipsy hath by force took up in her arms, and is carrying from friend and country. Kick sometimes I did, and also shriek and cry; but yet I was bound in the wings of the temptation, and the wind would carry me away. I thought also of Saul, and of the evil spirit that did possess him; and did greatly fear that my condition was the same with that of his, 1 Sam. xvi. 14.

103. In these days, when I have heard others talk of what was the sin against the Holy Ghost, then would the tempter so provoke me to desire to sin that sin, that I was as if I could not, must not, neither should be quiet until I had committed it; now no sin would serve but that: if it were to be committed by speaking of such a word, then I have been as if my mouth would have spoken that word, whether I would or no; and in so strong a measure was the temptation upon me, that often I have been ready to clap my hands under my chin, to hold my mouth from opening; at other times, to leap with my head downward into some muckhill hole, to keep my mouth from speaking.

104. Now again I counted the estate of every thing that God had made far better than this dreadful state of mine was; yea, gladly would I have been in the condition of a dog or a horse: for I knew they had no souls to perish under the everlasting weight of hell, or sin, as mine was like to do. Nay, though I saw this, and felt this, yet that which added to my sorrow was, that I

could not find, that with all my soul I did desire deliverance. That Scripture did also tear and rend my soul in the midst of these distractions: 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace to the wicked, saith my God,' Isaiah, lvii. 20, 21.

105. And now my heart was, at times, exceeding hard: If I would have given a thousand pounds for a tear I could not shed one; no nor sometimes scarce desire to shed one. I saw some could mourn and lament their sin: and others, again, could rejoice and bless God for Christ; and others again, could quietly talk of, and with gladness remember the word of God; while I only was in the storm or tempest. This much sunk me; I thought my condition was alone, but get out of, or get rid of these things, I could not.

106. While this temptation lasted, which was about a year, I could attend upon none of the ordinances of God, but with sore and great affliction. Yea, then was I most distressed with blasphemies: If I had been hearing the word, then uncleanness, blasphemies, and despair would hold me a captive there. if I had been reading, then sometimes I had sudden thoughts to question all I read; again my mind would be so strangely snatched away, that I have neither known, nor regarded, nor remembered, so much as the sentence that but now I have read.

107. In prayer also I have been greatly troubled at this time: sometimes I have thought I have felt him behind me pull my clothes. He would be also continually at me in time of prayer, to have done, break off, make haste, you have prayed enough, and stay no longer; still drawing my mind away. Sometimes also he would cast in such wicked thoughts as these, that I must pray to him, or for him: I have thought sometimes of that, 'Fall down,' or, 'if thou wilt fall down and worship me,' Matt. iv. 9.

108. Also, when I have had wandering thoughts

I have laboured to compose my mind, and fix it upon God: then with great force hath the tempter laboured to distract and confound me, and to turn away my mind, by presenting to my heart and fancy, the form of a bush, a bull, a besom, or the like, as if I should pray to these: to these he would also (at some times especially) so hold my mind, that I was as if I could think of nothing else or pray to nothing else but to these, or such as they.

109. Yet at times, I should have some strong and heart-affecting apprehensions of God, and the reality of the truth of his Gospel: but oh! how would my heart, at such times, put forth itself with unexpressible groanings. My whole soul was then in every word; I should cry with pangs after God, that he would be merciful unto me: but then I should be daunted again with such conceits as these; I should think that God did mock at these my prayers, saying, and that in the audience of the holy angels, 'This poor simple wretch doth hanker after me, as if I had nothing to do with my mercy but to bestow it on such as he. Alas, poor soul! how art thou deceived! It is not for such as thee to have favour with the Highest.'

110. Then hath the tempter come upon me also with such discouragements as these: 'You are very hot for mercy, but I will cool you; this frame shall not last always: many have been as hot as you for a spirit, but I have quenched their zeal;' (and with this, such and such, who were fallen off, would be set before mine eyes.) Then I would be afraid that I should do so too: but thought I, I am glad this comes into my mind: well, I will watch, and take what care I can. 'Though you do, saith Satan, I shall be too hard for you: I will cool you insensibly, by degrees, by little and little. What care I, saith he, though I be seven years in chilling your heart, if I can do it at last? Continually rocking will lull a crying child asleep: I will ply it close, but I will have

my end accomplished. Though you be burning hot at present, yet if I can pull you from this fire, I shall have you cold before it be long.'

111. These things brought me into great straits: for as I at present could not find myself fit for present death, so I thought to live long would make me yet more unfit; for time would make me forget all, and wear even the remembrance of the evil of sin, the worth of heaven, and the need I had of the blood of Christ to wash me, both out of mind and thought; but these things did not at present make me slack my crying, but rather did put me more upon it, like her who met with the adulterer, Deut. xii. 26. in which days that was a good word to me, after I had suffered these things a while; 'I am persuaded, that neither height, nor depth, nor death, nor life, &c. shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus,' Rom. viii. 38. And now I hoped long life should not destroy me, nor make me miss of heaven.

112. Yet I had some supports in this temptation, though they were then all questioned by me: that in the third of Jeremiah, at the first, was something to me; and so was the consideration of the fifth verse of that chapter, that though we have spoken and done evil things as we could, yet we should cry unto God, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth, and should return unto him.

113. I had also once a sweet glance from that in 2 Cor. v. 12, 'For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' One day, as I was sitting in a neighbour's house, and there very sad at the consideration of many blasphemies, that word came suddenly upon me, 'What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?' Rom. viii. 31. That also was an help unto me, 'Because I live, ye shall live also,' John, xiv. 19. But these were but hints, touches, and short visits, though very sweet when present, only they lasted not.

114. But afterward the Lord '... more fully and

graciously discover himself unto me, and indeed did quite, not only deliver me from the guilt that by these things were laid upon my conscience, but also from the very filth thereof, for the temptation was removed, and I was put into my right mind again, as other Christians were.

115. I remember that one day as I was travelling into the country, and musing on the wickedness and blasphemy of my heart, and considering of the enmity that was in me to God, that scripture came in my mind, 'He hath made peace by the blood of his cross,' Cor. i. 20, by which I was made to see that day that God and my soul were friends by his blood; yea, I saw that the justice of God, and my sinful soul, could embrace and kiss each other through his blood: this was a good day to me, I hope I shall not forget it.

116. At another time, as I was sitting by the fire, musing on my wretchedness, the Lord made that also a precious word unto me, 'For as much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death, he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver those who through the fear of death were all their life subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 14, 15. I thought that the glory of those words was then so weighty on me, that I was ready to swoon as I sat, not with grief and trouble, but with solid joy and peace.

117. At this time I also sat under the ministry of holy Mr. Gifford, whose doctrine, by God's grace, was much for my stability. This man made much his business to deliver the people of God from all those false and unsound tests, that by nature we are prone to. He would bid us take special heed that we took not up any truth upon trust; but cry mightily to God, that he would convince us of the reality thereof, and set us down therein by his own Spirit in the holy word: for, said he, if you do otherwise, when temptation comes, if strongly up-

on you, you not having received them with evidence from heaven, will find you want that help and strength now to resist that once you thought you had.

118. This was as seasonable to my soul as the former and latter rains in their seasons; for I had found, and that by sad experience, the truth of these his words: wherefore I found my soul through grace, very apt to drink in this doctrine, and to incline to pray to God, that in nothing that pertained to God's glory, and my own eternal happiness, he would suffer me to be without the confirmation thereof from heaven; for now I saw clearly, the difference betwixt the notion of the flesh and blood, and the revelation of God in heaven: also a great difference betwixt that faith that is feigned, and according to man's wisdom, and of that which comes by a man's being born thereunto of God, Matt. xvi. 15. 1 John, v. i.

119. But, oh! now, how was my soul led from truth to truth by God! Even from the birth and cradle of the Son of God, to his ascension, and second coming from heaven to judge the world.

120. Truly, I then found, upon this account, the great God was very good unto me; for, to my remembrance, there was not any thing that I then cried unto God to make known, and reveal unto me, but he was pleased to do it for me; I mean, not one part of the gospel of the Lord Jesus, but I was orderly led into it: methought I saw with great evidence, from the four Evangelists, the wonderful works of God, in giving Jesus Christ to save us, from his conception and birth, even to his second coming to judgment; methought I was as if I had seen him grow up; as from the cradle to the cross; to which also, when he came, I saw how gently he gave himself to be hanged, and nailed on it, for my sins and wicked doing. Also as I was musing on this his progress, that dropped on my spirit, 'He was ordained for the slaughter.' 1 Pet. i. 12. 20.

121. When I have considered also the truth of his

resurrection, and have remembered that word, 'Touch me not, Mary,' &c. I have seen, as if he had leaped out of the grave's mouth for joy, that he was risen again, and had got the conquest over our dreadful foes, John, xx. 17. I have also, in the spirit, seen him a man, on the right hand of God the Father for me; and have seen the manner of his coming from heaven, to judge the world with glory, and have been confirmed in these things by these Scriptures following, Acts, i. 9, 10. vii. 56. x. 42. Heb. vii. 24. viii. 38. Rev. i. 18. 1 Thess. iv. 17, 18.

122. Once I was troubled to know whether the Lord Jesus was a man as well as God, and God as well as man; and truly, in those days, let men say what they would, unless I had it with evidence from heaven, all was nothing to me: well, I was much troubled about this point, and could not tell how to be resolved: at last, that in Rev. v. came into my mind, 'And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb.' In the midst of the throne, thought I, there is the Godhead; in the midst of the elders, there is the Manhood. but oh! methought this did glisten! It was a goodly touch, and gave me sweet satisfaction. That other Scripture did also help me much in this: 'To us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, &c. Isa. ix. 6.

123. Also, besides these teachings of God in his word, the Lord made use of two things to confirm me in this truth: the one was the errors of the Quakers, and the other was the guilt of sin: for as the Quakers did oppose the truth, so God did the more confirm me in it, by leading me into th. Scripture that did wonderfully maintain it.

124. The errors that this people then maintained, were,

1. That the Holy Scriptures were not the word of God.
2. That every man in the world had the spirit of Christ, grace, faith, &c.
3. That Christ Jesus, as crucified, and dying, sixteen hundred years ago, did not satisfy divine justice for the sins of the people.
4. That Christ's flesh and blood was within the saints.
5. That the bodies of the good and bad that are buried in the churchyard, shall not arise again.
6. That the resurrection is past with good men already.
7. That that man Jesus, that was crucified between two thieves on Mount Calvary, in the land of Canaan, by Jerusalem, was not ascended above the starry heavens.
8. That he should not, even the same Jesus that died by the hands of the Jews, come again at the last day; and, as man, judge all nations, &c.

125. Many more vile and abominable things were in those days fomented by them, by which I was driven to a more narrow search of the Scriptures, and was not only enlightened, but greatly confirmed in the truth; and as I said, the guilt of sin did help me much; for still as that would come upon me, the blood of Christ did take it off again, and again, and again; and that too sweetly, according to the Scripture. O friends! cry to God to reveal Jesus Christ unto you; there is none teacheth like him.

126. It would be too long here to stay, to tell you in particular how God did set me down in all the things of Christ; yea, and also how he did open his words unto me, and make them shine before me, and cause them to dwell with me, talk with me, and comfort me over and over, both of his own being, and the being of his Son, and Spirit, and word, and gospel.

127. Only this, as I said before, I will say unto you again, that in general he was pleased to take

this course with me; first, to suffer me to be afflicted with temptations concerning them, and then reveal them to me: as sometimes I should lie under great guilt for sin, even crushed to the ground therewith; and then the Lord would show me the death of Christ; yea, and so sprinkle my conscience with his blood, that in that conscience, where but just now did reign and rage the law, even there would rest and abide the peace and love of God, through Christ.

128. Now I had an evidence, as I thought, of my salvation from heaven, with many golden seals thereon, all hanging in my sight: now could I remember this manifestation; and would often long and desire that the last day were come, that I might be for ever inflamed with the sight, and joy, and communion, with him whose head was crowned with thorns, whose face was spit upon, and body broken, and soul made an offering for my sins: for whereas before I lay continually trembling at the mouth of hell, now methought I was got so far therefrom, that I could not, when I looked back, scarce discern it; and oh! thought I, that I were fourscore years old now, that I might die quickly. that my soul might be gone to rest.

129. But before I had got thus far out of these my temptations, I did greatly long to see some ancient godly man's experience, who had lived some hundreds of years before I was born: well, after many such longings in my mind, the God, in whose hands are all our days and ways, did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther's; it was his comment on the Galatians; it also was so old, that it was ready to fall piece from piece, if I did but turn it over. Now I was pleased much, that such an old book had fallen into my hands; the which, when I had but a little way perused, I found my condition in his experience so largely and profoundly handled, as if his book had been written out of my heart. This made me marvel; for thus thought I, This man could not know any thing of the state of Christians now, but must

needs write and speak the experience of former days.

130. Besides, he doth most gravely also, in that book, debate of the rise of these temptations, namely, blasphemy, desperation, and the like; showing that the law of Moses, as well as the devil, death, and hell, hath a very great hand therein: the which, at first, was very strange to me; but considering and watching, I found it so indeed. But of particulars here, I intend nothing; only that I do prefer this book of Martin Luther upon the Galatians (excepting the Holy Bible) before all the books that ever I have seen, as most fit for a wounded conscience.

131. And now I found, as I thought, that I loved Christ dearly: Oh! methought my soul cleaved unto him, my affections cleaved unto him: I felt my love to him as hot as fire; but I did quickly find that my great love was too little; and that I, who had, as I thought, such a burning love to Jesus Christ, could let him go again for a trifle: God can tell how to abase us, and can hide pride from man. Quickly after this my love was tried to the purpose.

132. For after the Lord had, in this manner, thus graciously delivered me from this great and sore temptation, and had given me such strong consolation and blessed evidence from heaven, touching my interest in his love through Christ; the tempter came upon me again, and that with a more grievous and dreadful temptation than before.

133. And that was, To sell and part with the most blessed Christ, to exchange him for the things of this life, for any thing. The temptation lay upon me for the space of a year, and did follow me so continually, that I was not rid of it one day in a month; no, not sometimes one hour in many days together, unless when I was asleep.

134. And though, in my judgment, I was persuaded that those who were once effectually in Christ, (as I hoped, through his grace, I had seen myself,) could never lose him for ever: ('For the

land shall not be sold for ever, for the land is mine,' saith God, Lev. xxv. 23,) yet it was a continual vexation to me, to think that I should have so much as one such thought within me against a Christ, a Jesus, that had done for me as he had done; and yet then I had almost none others but such blasphemous ones.

135. But it was neither my dislike of the thought, nor yet any desire and endeavour to resist it, that in the least did shake or abate the continuation or force and strength thereof; for it did always, in almost whatever I thought, intermix itself therewith in such sort, that I could neither eat my food, stoop for a pin, chop a stick, or cast mine eye to look on this or that, but still the temptation would come. Sell Christ for this, or sell Christ for that; sell him, sell him.

136. Sometimes it would run in my thoughts, not so little as a hundred times together, Sell him, sell him: against which, I may say for whole hours together, I have been forced to stand as continually leaning and forcing my spirit against it, lest haply, before I were aware, some wicked thought might arise in my heart, that might consent thereto; and sometimes the tempter would make me believe I had consented to it; but then I should be as tortured upon a rack, for whole days together.

137. This temptation did put me to such scares, lest I should at sometimes, I say, consent thereto, and be overcome therewith, that by the very force of my mind, my very body would be put into action or motion, by way of pushing or thrusting with my hands or elbows; still answering as fast as the destroyer said, Sell him: I will not, I will not; I will not; no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands of worlds: thus reckoning, lest I should set too low a value on him, even until I scarce well knew where I was, or how to be composed again.

138. At these seasons he would not let me eat any food at quiet; but, forsooth, when I was set at the table at any meat, I must go hence to pray; I must leave my food now, and just now. so coun-

terfelt holy also would this devil be. When I was thus tempted, I should say in myself, Now I am at meat, let me make an end: No, said he, you must do it now, or you will displease God, and despise Christ. Wherefore I was much afflicted with these things; and because of the sinfulness of my nature (imagining that these were impulses from God) I should deny to do it as if I denied God; and then should I not be as guilty, because I did not obey a temptation of the devil, as if I had broken the law of God indeed.

133. But to be brief: one morning, as I did lie in my bed, I was, as at other times, most fiercely assaulted with this temptation, to sell and part with Christ; the wicked suggestion still running in my mind, Sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, sell him, as fast as a man could speak: against which also, in my mind, as at other times, I answered, No, no, not for thousands, thousands, thousands, at least twenty times together: but at last, after much striving, I felt this thought pass through my heart, Let him go if he will; and I thought also, that I felt my heart freely consent thereto. Oh! the diligence of Satan! Oh! the desperateness of man's heart!

140. Now was the battle won, and down fell I, as a bird that is shot from the top of a tree, into great guilt, and fearful despair. Thus getting out of my bed, I went moping into the field; but God knows, with as heavy a heart as mortal man, I think, could bear; where, for the space of two hours, I was like a man bereft of life; and, as now, past all recovery, and bound over to eternal punishment.

141 And withal, that Scripture did seize upon my soul: 'Or profane person, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright: for ye know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,' Heb. xii. 16, 17.

142. Now was I as one bound; I felt myself shut

up into the judgment to come; nothing now, for years together, would abide with me, but damnation, and an expectation of damnation: I say, nothing now would abide with me but this, save some few moments for relief, as in the sequel you will see.

143. These words were to my soul like fetters o' brass to my legs, in the continual sound of which I went for several months together. But about ten or eleven o'clock on that day, as I was walking under a hedge, (full of sorrow and guilt, God knows,) and bemoaning myself for this hard hap, that such a thought should arise within me, suddenly this sentence rushed in upon me, 'The blood of Christ remits all guilt' At this I made a stand in my spirit: with that this word took hold upon me, 'The blood of Jesus Christ, his own son, cleansed us from all sin,' 1 John, i. 7.

144. Now I began to conceive peace in my soul; and methought I saw as if the tempter did leer and steal away from me, as being ashamed of what he had done. At the same time also I had my sin, and the blood of Christ, thus represented to me: That my sin, when compared to the blood of Christ, was no more to it than this little clod or stone before me is to this vast and wide field that here I see. This gave me good encouragement for the space of two or three hours; in which time also, methought I saw, by faith, the Son of God, as suffering for my sins: but because it tarried not, I therefore sunk in my spirit, under exceeding guilt again.

145. But chiefly by the afore-mentioned Scripture concerning Esau's selling of his birthright, for that Scripture would lie all day long in my mind; for when I would strive to turn me to this Scripture or that, for relief, still that sentence would be sounding in me: 'For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'

146. Sometimes, indeed, I should have a touch from that in Luke, xxii. 31. 'I have prayed for

thee that thy faith fail not;' but it would not abide upon me; neither could I, indeed, when I considered my state, find ground to conceive in the least, that there should be the root of that grace in me, having sinned as I had done. Now was I tore and rent in a heavy case for many days together.

147. Then began I, with sad and careful heart, to consider of the nature and largeness of my sin, and to search into the word of God, if I could in any place espy a word of promise, by which I might take relief. Wherefore I began to consider that of Mark, iii. 'All manner of sins and blasphemies shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme:' which place, methought, at a blush, did contain a large and glorious promise for the pardon of high offences; but considering the place more fully, I thought it was rather to be understood as relating more chiefly to those who had, while in a natural state, committed such things as there are mentioned; but not to me, who had not only received light and mercy, but that had, both after, and also contrary to that, so slighted Christ as I had done.

148. I feared therefore that this wicked sin of mine might be that sin unpardonable, of which he here thus speaketh: 'But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost, hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation,' Mark iii. And I did the rather give credit to this, because of that sentence in the Hebrews: 'For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' And this stuck always with me.

149. And now was I both a burden and a terror to myself; now was I weary of my life, and yet afraid to die. Oh! how gladly now would I have been any body but myself! any thing but a man, and in any condition but my own! for there was nothing did pass more frequently over my mind, than that it was impossible for me to be

forgiven my transgression, and to be saved from the wrath to come.

150. And now I began to call back time that was past; wishing a thousand times twice told, that the day was yet to come, when I should be tempted to such a sin; concluding with great indignation, both against my heart, and all assaults, how I would rather have been torn in pieces than be found a consentor thereto. But, alas! these wishings and resolvings were now too late to help me; this thought had passed my heart, God hath let me go, and I am fallen. Oh! thought I, 'that it was with me as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me!' Job, xxix. 2.

151. Then again I began to compare my sin with others, to see if I could find any of those who were saved had done as I had done. So I considered David's adultery and murder, and found them most heinous crimes; and those too committed after light and grace received: but yet, by considering, I perceived that his transgressions were only such as were against the law of Moses, from which the Lord Christ could, with the consent of his word, deliver him: but mine was against the gospel, yea, against the Mediator thereof; I had sold my Saviour.

152. Now again, should I be as if racked upon the wheel, when I considered, that, besides the guilt that possessed me, I should be so void of grace, so bewitched! What, thought I, must it be no sin but this? Must it needs be the 'great transgressions?' Psalm, xix. 13. Must that wicked one touch my soul? 1 John, v. 18. Oh! what sting did I find in all these sentences!

153. What, thought I, is there but one sin that is unpardonable? But one sin that layeth the soul without the reach of God's mercy; and must I be guilty of that? Is there but one sin, among so many millions of sins, for which there is no forgiveness; and must I commit this? Oh! unhappy sin! Oh! unhappy man! These things would so break and confound my spirit, that I thought at times they would have broke my wits

and still to aggravate my misery, that would run in my mind, 'You know how, that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected.' Oh! no one knows the terror of those days but myself.

154. After this I began to consider of Peter's sin, which he committed in denying his master: and indeed, this came nighest to mine of any that I could find, for he had denied his Saviour, as I, after light and mercy received; yea, and that too, after warning given him. I also considered, that he did it once and twice; and that, after time to consider betwixt. But though I put all these circumstances together, that, if possible, I might find help, yet I considered again, that his was but a denial of his master, but mine was, a selling of my Saviour. Wherefore I thought with myself, that I came nearer to Judas, than either to David or Peter.

155. Here again my torment would flame out and afflict me; yea, it would grind me, as it were, to powder, to consider the preservation of God toward others, while I fell into the snare; for I could evidently see God preserved them, notwithstanding their wickedness, and would not let them, as he had let me, become a son of perdition.

156. But oh! how did my soul at this time prize the preservation that God did set about his people! Ah, how safely did I see them walk, whom God had hedged in! They were within his care, protection, and special providence: though they were full as bad as I by nature; yet, because he loved them, he would not suffer them to fall without the range of mercy: but as for me, he would not preserve me, nor keep me; but suffered me, because I was a reprobate, to fall as I had done. Now did those blessed places that speak of God's keeping his people, shine like the sun before me, though not to comfort me, yet to show me the blessed state and heritage of those whom the Lord hath blessed.

157. Now I saw, that as God had his hand in all the providences and dispensations that overtook

his elect; so he had his hand in all the temptations that they had to sin against him; and also to leave them for a time to such things only that might not destroy, but humble them; as might not put them beyond, but lay them in the way of renewing his mercy. But oh! what love, what care, what kindness, and mercy did I now see, mixing itself with the most severe and dreadful of all God's ways to his people! He would let David, Hezekiah, Solomon, Peter, and others fall, but he would not let them fall into the sin unpardonable, nor into hell for sin. O! thought I, these be the men that God hath loved; these be the men that God, though he chastiseth them, keeps them in safety by him. But all these thoughts added sorrow, grief, and horror to me, and was killing to me. If I thought how God kept his own, that was killing to me; if I thought of how I was fallen myself, that was killing to me. As all things wrought together for the best, and to do good to them that were the called, according to his purpose; so I thought that all things wrought for my damage, and for my eternal overthrow.

158. Then I began to compare my sin with the sin of Judas, that, if possible, I might find if mine differed from that, which in truth is unpardonable: and oh! thought I, if it should differ though but the breadth of a hair, what a happy condition is my soul in! And by considering, I found that Judas did this intentionally, but mine was against prayer and strivings: besides, his was committed with much deliberation, but mine in a fearful hurry on a sudden: all this while I was tossed to and fro like the locust, and driven from trouble to sorrow; hearing always the sound of Esau's fall in mine ears, and the dreadful consequences thereof.

159. Yet this consideration about Judas's sin was, for a while, some little relief to me; for I saw I had not, as to the circumstances, transgressed so fully as he. But this was quickly gone again, for I thought with myself, there might be more ways than one to commit this unpardonable sin; where-

fore, for aught I yet could perceive, this iniquity of mine might be such as might never be passed by.

160. I was often now ashamed that I should be like such an ugly man as Judas: I thought also how loathsome I should be unto all the saints in the day of judgment; insomuch, that now I scarce could see a good man that I believed had a good conscience, but I should feel my heart tremble at him, while I was in his presence. Oh! now I saw a glory in walking with God, and what a mercy it was to have a good conscience before him.

161. I was about this time tempted to content myself by receiving some false opinions; as, That there should be no such thing as a day of judgment; that we should not rise again; and that sin was no such grievous thing: the tempter suggesting thus: 'For if these things should indeed be true, yet to believe otherwise, would yield you ease for the present. If you must perish, never torment yourself so much beforehand; drive the thoughts of damning out of your mind, by possessing your mind with some such conclusions that atheists and ranters used to help themselves withal.'

162. But, oh! when such thoughts have led through my heart, how, as it were within a step, hath death and judgment been in my view! But, methinks, I see by this, that Satan will use any means to keep the soul from Christ; he loveth not an awakened frame of spirit; security, blindness, darkness, and error, is the very kingdom and habitation of the wicked one.

163. I found it a hard work now to pray to God, because despair was swallowing me up; I thought I was, as with a tempest, driven away from God; for always when I cried to God for mercy, this would come in, 'Tis too late, I am lost, God hath let me fall; not to my correction, but my condemnation: my sin is unpardonable: and I know concerning Esau, how that after he had sold his birth-right, he would have received the blessing, but was rejected.' About this time, I did light on that

dreadful story of that miserable mortal, Francis Spira; a book that was to my troubled spirit as salt, when rubbed into a fresh wound: every sentence in that book, every groan of that man, with all the rest of his actions in his colours, as his tears, his prayers, his gnashing of teeth, his wringing of hands, his twisting, and languishing, and pining away under that mighty hand of God that was upon him, was as knives and daggers in my soul; especially that sentence of his was frightful to me, 'Man knows the beginning of sin, but who bounds the issues thereof?' Then would the former sentence, as the conclusion of all, fall like a hot thunderbolt again upon my conscience: 'For you know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.'

164. Then should I be struck into a very great trembling, insomuch that I could, for whole days together, feel my very body, as well as my mind, to shake and totter under the sense of this dreadful judgment of God: I felt also such a clogging and heat at my stomach, by reason of this my terror, that I was, especially at some times, as if my breast-bone would split asunder; then I thought of that concerning Judas, 'who, by his falling headlong, burst asunder and all his bowels gushed out, cts, l.

165. I feared also that this was the mark that God did set on Cain, even continual fear and trembling, under the heavy load and guilt that he had charged on him for the blood of his brother Abel. Thus did I twine and shrink under the burden that was upon me, so that I could neither stand nor go, nor lie either at rest or quiet.

66. Yet that saying would sometimes come into my mind: 'He hath received gifts for the rebellious,' Psalm lxxviii. 18. The rebellious, thought I! Why, surely they are such as those who, after they have sworn subjection to his government, have taken up arms against him; and this, thought

I, is my very condition: I once loved him, feared him, served him; but now I am a rebel; I have sold him, I have said, 'Let him go if he will;' but yet he has gifts for rebels; and then why not for me.

167. This sometimes I thought on, and should labour to take hold thereof; but in this also I missed of my desire; I was driven with force beyond it; I was like a man going to execution, even by that place where he would fain creep in and hide himself, but may not.

168. Again, after I had thus considered the sins of the saints in particular, and found mine went beyond them, then I began to think with myself, Set the case I should put all theirs together, and mine alone against them, might I not then find encouragement? For if mine, though bigger than any one, yet should be but equal to all, then there is hopes; for that blood that hath virtue enough in it to wash away all theirs, hath virtue enough in it to wash away mine, though this one be full as big, if not bigger than all theirs. Here again, I would consider the sin of David, of Solomon, of Manasseh, of Peter, and the rest of the great offenders; and should also labour, what I might with fairness, to aggravate and heighten their sins by several circumstances.

169. I should think with myself that David shed blood to cover his adultery, and that by the sword of the children of Ammon; a work that could not be done, but by continuance, deliberate contrivance, which was a great aggravation to his sin. But then this would turn upon me: Ah! but these were but sins against the law, from which there was a Jesus sent to save them; but yours is a sin against the Saviour, and who shall save you from that?

170. Then I thought on Solomon, and how he sinned in loving strange women, in falling away to their idols, in building them temples, in doing this after light, in his old age, after great mercy received: but the same conclusion that cut me off in the former consideration, cut me off as to this;

namely, That all those were but sins against the law, for which God had provided a remedy ; but I had sold my Saviour, and there remained no more sacrifice for sin.

171. I would then add to these men's sins, the sins of Manasseh ; how that he built altars for idols in the house of the Lord ; he also observed times, used enchantments, had to do with wizards, was a wizard, had his familiar spirits, burned his children in the fire in sacrifice to devils, and made the streets of Jerusalem run down with the blood of innocents. These, thought I, are great sins, sins of a bloody colour ; but yet it would turn again upon me, 'They are none of them of the nature of yours ; you have parted with Jesus you have sold your Saviour.'

172. This one consideration would always kill my heart, my sin was point blank against my Saviour ; and that too, at that height, that I had in my heart said of him. 'Let him go if he will.' Oh ! methought this sin was bigger than the sins of a country, of a kingdom, or of the whole world, no one pardonable, not all of them together, was able to equal mine ; mine outwent them every one.

173. Now I should find my mind to flee from God as from the face of a dreadful judge ; yet this was my torment, I could not escape his hand ; 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God,' Heb. x. But, blessed be his grace, that Scripture, in these flying fits, would call, as running after me ; 'I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions ; and as a cloud thy sins : Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee,' Isa. xlv. 22. This, I say, would come in upon my mind, when I was fleeing from the face of God ; that is, my mind and spirit fled before him ; by reason of his highness, I could not endure : then would the text cry, 'Return unto me ;' it would cry with a very loud voice, 'Return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.' Indeed, this would make me make a little stop, and, as it were, look over my shoulder behind me, to see

if I could discern that the God of grace did follow me with a pardon in his hand; but I could no sooner do that, but all would be clouded and darkened again by that sentence, 'For you know, how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Wherefore I could not refrain, but fled, though at sometimes it cried, 'Return, return,' as it did halloo after me: but I feared to close in therewith, lest it should not come from God; for that other, as I said, was still sounding in my conscience, 'For you know, that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, &c.

174. Once as I was walking to and fro in a good man's shop, bemoaning my sad and doleful state, afflicting myself with self-abhorrence for this wicked and ungodly thought; lamenting also that I should commit so great a sin, greatly fearing I should not be pardoned; praying also, that if this sin of mine did differ from that against the Holy Ghost, the Lord would show it me: and being now ready to sink with fear, suddenly there was, as if there had rushed in at the window the noise of wind upon me, but very pleasant, and as if I heard a voice speaking, 'Didst thou ever refuse to be justified by the blood of Christ?' And withal, my whole life of profession past was in a moment opened to me, wherein I was made to see, that designedly I had not: so my heart answered groaningly, 'No.' Then fell, with power, that word of God upon me, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh,' Heb. xii. 25. This made a strange seizure upon my spirit; it brought light with it, and commanded a silence in my heart of all those tumultuous thoughts, that did before use, like masterless hell hounds, to roar and bellow, and make a hideous noise within me. It showed me also that Jesus Christ had yet a word of grace and mercy for me, that he had not, as I had feared, quite forsaken and cast off my soul; yea, this was a kind of check for my proneness to desperation; a kind of threatening

of me, if I did not, notwithstanding my sins, and the heinousness of them, venture my salvation upon the Son of God. But as to my determining about this strange dispensation, what it was, I know not; or from whence it came, I know not; I have not yet in twenty years' time been able to make a judgment of it; 'I thought then what here I should be loath to speak.' But verily that sudden rushing wind was, as if an angel had come upon me, but both it, and the salvation, I will leave until the day of judgment; only this I say, it commanded a great calm in my soul; it persuaded me there might be hope: it showed me, as I thought, what the sin unpardonable was, and that my soul had yet the blessed privilege to flee to Jesus Christ for mercy. But I say, concerning this dispensation, I know not what to say unto it yet; which was also, in truth, the cause, that at first I did not speak of it in the book; I do now also leave it to be thought on by men of sound judgment. I lay not the stress of my salvation thereupon, but upon the Lord Jesus, in the promise; yet seeing I am here unfolding of my secret things, I thought it might not be altogether inexpedient to let this also show itself, though I cannot now relate the matter as there I did experience it. This lasted in the favour of it for about three or four days, and then I began to mistrust, and to despair again.

175. Wherefore still my life hung in doubt before me, not knowing which way I should tip; only this I found my soul desire, even to cast itself at the foot of grace, by prayer and supplication. But oh! 'twas hard for me now, to have the face to pray to this Christ for mercy, against whom I had thus most vilely sinned: 'twas hard work, I say, to offer to look him in the face, against whom I had so vilely sinned; and indeed I have found it as difficult to come to God by prayer after backsliding from him, as to do any other thing. Oh! the shame that did now attend me! especially when I thought, I am now a going to pray to him for mercy, that I had so lightly

esteemed but a while before! I was ashamed; yea, even confounded, because this villany had been committed by me: but I saw that there was but one way with me; I must go to him, and humble myself unto him, and beg that he, of his wonderful mercy, would show pity to me, and have mercy upon my wretched sinful soul.

176. Which when the tempter perceived, he strongly suggested to me, 'That I ought not to pray to God; for prayer was not for any in my case; neither could it do me good, because I had rejected the Mediator, by whom all prayers came with acceptance to God the Father; and without whom no prayer could come into his presence: wherefore now to pray, seeing God has cast you off, is the next way to anger and offend him more than you ever did before.'

177. 'For God,' saith he, 'hath been weary of you for these several years already, because you are none of his; your bawlings in his ears hath been no pleasant voice to him; and therefore he let you sin this sin, that you might be quite cut off; and will you pray still? This the devil urged, and set forth that in Numbers, when Moses said to the children of Israel, 'That because they would not go up to possess the land, when God would have them, therefore for ever after he did bar them out from thence, though they prayed they might with tears,' Numb. xiv.

178. As 'tis said in another place, Exod. xxi. 14, 'The man that sins presumptuously shall be taken from God's altar that he may die;' even as Joab was by King Solomon, when he thought to find shelter there, 1 Kings ii. 27, 28, &c. These places did pinch me very sore; yet I thought with myself, I can but die; and if it must be so, it shall once be said, 'That such a one died at the foot of Christ in prayer.' This I did, but with great difficulty, God doth know; and that because still that saying about Esau would be set at my heart, even like a flaming sword to keep the way of the tree

of life, lest I should take thereof and live. Oh who knows how hard a thing I found it, to come to God in prayer!

179. I did also desire the prayers of the people of God for me, but I feared that God would give them no heart to do it; yea, I trembled in my soul to think, that some or other of them would shortly tell me, that God hath said those words to them, that he once did say to the prophet, concerning the children of Israel; 'Pray not for this people, for I have rejected them,' Jer. xi. 14, so, 'Pray not for him, for I have rejected him.' Yea, I thought that he had whispered this to some of them already, only they durst not tell me so; neither durst I ask them of it, for fear if it should be so, it would make me quite beside myself. 'Man knows the beginning of sin,' said Spira, 'but who bounds the issues thereof?'

180. About this time I took an opportunity to break my mind to an ancient Christian, and told him all my case: I told him also, that I was afraid that I had sinned a sin against the Holy Ghost; and he told me, 'He thought so too.' Here therefore I had but cold comfort; but talking a little more with him, I found him, though a good man, a stranger to much combat with the devil. Wherefore I went to God again, as well as I could, for mercy still.

181. Now also did the tempter begin to mock me in my misery, saying, 'That seeing I had thus parted with the Lord Jesus, and provoked him to displeasure, who would have stood between my soul and the flame of devouring fire, there was now but one way, and that was, to pray that God the Father would be the mediator betwixt his Son and me; that we might be reconciled again, and that I might have that blessed benefit in him, that his blessed saints enjoyed.'

182. Then did that Scripture seize upon my soul 'He is of one mind, and who can turn him?' Oh! I saw, 'twas as easy to persuade him to make a new world, a new covenant, or new Bible,

besides that we have already, as to pray for such a thing: and then would that saying rend my soul asunder, 'Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' Acts, iv. 12

183. Now the most free, and fully, and gracious words of the gospel, were the greatest torment to me; yea, nothing so afflicted me as the thoughts of Jesus Christ, the remembrance of a Saviour; nothing did twinge my conscience like this: every thing that I thought of the Lord Jesus, of his grace, love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, meekness, death, blood, promises, and blessed exhortations, comforts, and consolations, it went to my soul like a sword; for still, unto these my considerations of the Lord Jesus, these thoughts would make place for themselves in my heart: 'Ay, this is the Jesus, the loving Saviour, the Son of God, whom you have parted with, whom you have slighted, despised, and abused. This is the only Saviour, the only Redeemer, the only one that could so love sinners, as to wash them from their sins in his own most precious blood; but you have no part nor lot in this Jesus; you have put him from you; you have said in your heart, Let him go if he will. Now therefore you are severed from him; you have severed yourself from him; behold then his goodness, but yourself to be no partaker of it!' Oh! thought I, what have I lost! What have I parted with! What has disinherited my poor soul! Oh! 'tis sad to be destroyed by the grace and mercy of God; to have the Lamb, the Saviour, turn lion and destroyer, Rev. vi. I also trembled, as I have said, at the sight of the saints of God, especially at those that greatly loved him, and that made it their business to walk continually with him in this world; for they did, both in their words, their carriage, and all their expressions of tenderness and fear to sin against their precious Saviour, condemn, lay guilt upon, and also add continual affliction and shame unto my soul.

'The dread of them was upon me. and I trembled at God's Samuels.' 1 Sam. xvi. 4.

184. Now also the tempter began afresh to mock my soul another way, saying, 'That Christ indeed did pity my case, and was sorry for my loss; but forasmuch as I had sinned and transgressed as I had done, he could by no means help me, nor save me, from what I feared; for my sin was not of the nature of theirs for whom he bled and died; neither was it counted with those that were laid to his charge, when he ~~was~~ ^{was} hanged on a tree; therefore, unless he should come down from heaven, and die anew for this sin, though indeed he did greatly pity me, yet I could have no benefit of him.' These things may seem ridiculous in themselves, but to me they were most tormenting cogitations; every one of them augmented my misery, that Jesus Christ should have so much love as to pity me, when yet he could not help me too; nor did I think that the reason why he could not help me, was because his merits were weak, or his grace and salvation spent on others already, but because his faithfulness to his threatenings would not let him extend his mercy to me. Besides, I thought, as I have already hinted, that my sin was not within the bounds of that pardon that was wrapped up in a promise; and if not, then I knew surely, that it was more easy for heaven and earth to pass away, than for me to have eternal life. So that the ground of all these fears of mine did arise from a steadfast belief I had of the stability of the holy word of God, and also from my being misinformed of the nature of my sin.

185. But oh! how this would add to my affliction, to conceit that I should be guilty of such a sin, for which he did not die. These thoughts did so confound me, and imprison me, and tie me up from faith, that I knew not what to do. But oh! thought I, that he would come down again! Oh! that the work of man's redemption was yet to be done by Christ! How would I pray him and entreat him to count and reckon this sin among the rest for

which he died! But this Scripture would strike me down as dead! 'Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him,' Rom. vi. 9.

186. Thus, by the strange and unusual assaults of the tempter, my soul was like a broken vessel, driven as with the winds and tossed sometimes headlong into despair; sometimes upon the covenant of works, and sometimes to wish that the new covenant, and the conditions thereof, might so far forth as I thought myself concerned, be turned another way, and changed. 'But in all these, I was as those that jostle against the rocks; more broken, scattered, and rent.' Oh! the unthought of imaginations, frights, fears, and terrors, that are affected by a thorough application of guilt yielding to desperation! 'This is the man that hath his dwelling among the tombs with the dead; that is always crying out, and cutting himself with stones,' Mark, v. 1—3. But I say, all in vain; desperation will not comfort him, the old covenant will not save him; nay, 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, before one jot or tittle of the word and law of grace will fail or be removed.' This I saw, this I felt, and under this I groaned; yet this advantage I got thereby, namely, a further confirmation of the certainty of the way of salvation, and that the Scriptures were the word of God. Oh! I cannot now express what I then saw and felt of the steadiness of Jesus Christ, the rock of man's salvation: what was done could not be undone, added to, nor altered. I saw, indeed, that sin might drive the soul beyond Christ, even the sin which is unpardonable; but wo to him that was so driven, for the word would shut him out.

187. Thus was I always sinking whatever I did think or do. So one day I walked to a neighbouring town, and sat down upon a settle in the street, and fell into a very deep pause about the most fearful state my sin had brought me to, and after long musing, I lifted up my head, but methought I saw as if the sun that shineth in the heavens did grudge

to give light ; and as if the very stones in the street and tiles upon the houses, did bend themselves against me. O how happy now was every creature over I was ! For they stood fast, and kept their station, but I was gone and lost.

188. Then breaking out in the bitterness of my soul, I said to myself, with a grievous sigh, ‘ how can God comfort such a wretch !’ I had no sooner said it, but this returned upon me, as an echo doth answer a voice, ‘ This sin is not unto death.’ At which I was, as if I had been raised out of the grave, and cried out again, ‘ Lord, how couldst thou find out such a word as this ?’ for I was filled with admiration at the fitness, and at the unexpectedness of the sentence ; the power and sweetness, and light and glory that came with it also, was marvellous to me to find : I was now, for the time, out of doubt, as to that about which I so much was in doubt before ; my fears before were, that my sin was not pardonable, and so that I had no right to pray, to repent, &c. or that if I did, it would be of no advantage or profit to me. But now, thought I, if this sin is not unto death, then it is pardonable ; therefore from this I have encouragement to come to God by Christ for mercy, to consider the promise of forgiveness as that which stands with open arms to receive me as well as others. This therefore was a great easement to my mind, to wit, that my sin was pardonable, that it was not sin unto death, 1 John, v. 16, 17. None but those that know what my trouble (by their own experience) was, can tell what relief came to my soul by this consideration : it was a release to me from my former storms : I seemed now to stand upon the same ground with other sinners, and to have as good right to the word and prayer as any of them.

189. Now, I say, I was in hopes that my sin was not unpardonable, but that there might be hopes for me to obtain forgiveness. But oh ! how Satan did now lay about him for to bring me down again ! But he could by no means do it, neither

this day, nor the most part of the next, for this sentence stood like a mill post at my back: yet toward the evening of the next day, I felt this word begin to leave me, and to withdraw its supportation from me, and so I returned to my old fears again, but with a great deal of grudging and peevishness, for I feared the sorrow of despair; nor could my faith now long retain this word.

190. But the next day, at evening, being under many fears, I went to seek the Lord, and as I prayed, I cried, and my soul cried to him in these words, with strong cries: 'O Lord, I beseech thee, show me that thou hast loved me with everlasting love,' Jer. xxxi. 3. I had no sooner said it, but with sweetness this returned upon me, as an echo, or sounding again, 'I have loved thee with an everlasting love.' Now I went to bed in quiet; also when I awaked the next morning, it was fresh upon my soul; and I believed it.

191. But yet the tempter left me not, for it could not be so little as a hundred times, that he that day did labour to break my peace. Oh! the combats and conflicts that I did then meet with! as I strove to hold by this word, that of Esau would fly in my face like lightning: I should be sometimes up and down twenty times in an hour; yet God did bear me out, and keep my heart upon this word; from which I had also, for several days together, very much sweetness, and comfortable hopes of pardon: for thus it was made out to me: 'I loved thee whilst thou wast committing this sin, I loved thee before, I love thee still, and I will love thee for ever.'

192. Yet I saw my sin most barbarous, and a filthy crime, and could not but conclude, with great shame and astonishment, that I had horridly abused the Holy Son of God; wherefore I felt my soul greatly to love and pity him; and my bowels to yearn toward him; for I saw he was still my friend, and did reward me good for evil; yea, the love and affection that then did burn within me to my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, did

work at this time such a strong and hot desire of revenge upon myself for the abuse I had done unto him, that, to speak as I then thought, had I a thousand gallons of blood within my veins, I could freely then have spilt it all, at the command and feet of this my Lord and Saviour.

193. And as I was thus musing, and in my studies, considering how to love the Lord, and to express my love to him, that saying came in upon me, 'If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who should stand? but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' Psalm cxxx. 3, 4. These were good words to me, especially the latter part thereof; to wit, that there is forgiveness with the Lord, that he might be feared; that is, as I then understood it, that he might be loved, and had in reverence; for it was thus made out to me, 'That the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of his poor creatures, that rather than he would go without their love, he would pardon their transgression.'

194. And now was that word fulfilled on me, and I was also refreshed by it; 'Then shall they be ashamed and confounded, and never open their mouths any more, because of their shame, when I am pacified toward them for all that they have done, saith the Lord God.' Ezek. xvi. 36. Thus was my soul, at this time, (and as I then did think for ever,) set at liberty from being afflicted with my former guilt and amazement.

195. But before many weeks were gone I began to despond again, fearing, lest, notwithstanding all that I had enjoyed, that I might be deceived and destroyed at the last; for this consideration came strong into my mind, 'That whatever comfort and peace I thought I might have from the word of the promise of life, yet unless there could be found in my refreshment, a concurrence and agreement in the Scriptures, let me think what I will thereof, and hold it never so fast, I should find no such thing at the end; for the Scriptures cannot be broken.' John, x. 35.

196. Now began my heart again to ache, and fear I might meet with a disappointment at last. Wherefore I began with all seriousness to examine my former comfort, and to consider whether one that had sinned as I had done, might with confidence trust upon the faithfulness of God, laid down in these words, by which I had been comforted, and on which I had leaned myself: but now were brought these sayings to my mind, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.' Heb. vi. 'For, if we sin wilfully, after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' Heb. x. Even as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birth-right. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Heb. xii.

197. Now was the word of the gospel forced from my soul! so that no promise or encouragement was to be found in the Bible for me: and now would that saying work upon my spirit to afflict me, 'Rejoice not, O Israel, for joy, as other people,' Hosea, ix. 1. For I saw indeed, there was cause of rejoicing for those that held to Jesus; but as for me, I had cut myself off by my transgressions, and left myself neither foot-hold nor hand-hold among all the stays and props in the precious word of life.

198. And truly, I did now feel myself to sink into a gulf, as a house whose foundation is destroyed; I did liken myself in this condition, unto the case of a child that was fallen into a mill-pit, who though it could make some shift to scrabble and sprawl in the water, yet because it could find neither hold for hand nor foot, therefore at last it must

die in that condition. So soon as this fresh assault had fastened on my soul, that scripture came into my heart, 'This is for many days,' Dan. x. 13. And indeed I found it was so ; for I could not be delivered, nor brought to peace again, until well nigh two years and a half were completely finished. Wherefore these words, though in themselves they tended to no discouragement, yet to me, who feared this condition would be eternal, they were at sometimes a help and refreshment to me.

199. For, thought I, *many days* are not for ever ; *many days* will have an end ; therefore, seeing I was to be afflicted not a few, but many days, yet I was glad it was but for many days. Thus, I say, I could recall myself sometimes, and give myself a help ; for as soon as ever the word came into my mind, at first, I knew my trouble would be long, yet this would be but sometimes ; for I could not always think on this, nor ever be helped by it, though I did.

200. Now while these scriptures lay before me, and laid sin anew at my door, that saying in Luke, xviii. 1, with others, did encourage me to prayer : then the tempter again laid at me very sore, suggesting that neither the mercy of God, nor yet the blood of Christ, did at all concern me, nor could they help me for my sin ; therefore it was but in vain to pray. Yet, thought I, I will pray. But, said the tempter, your sin is unpardonable. Well, said I, I will pray. It is to no boot, said he. Yet, said I, I will pray. So I went to prayer to God ; and while I was at prayer, I uttered words to this effect : 'Lord, Satan tells me, that neither thy mercy, nor Christ's blood, is sufficient to save my soul : Lord, shall I honour thee most, by believing thou wilt, and canst ? or him, by believing thou neither wilt nor canst ? Lord, I would fain honour thee by believing thou wilt and canst.'

201. And as I was thus before the Lord, that scripture fastened on my heart, 'O man, great is thy faith !' Matt. xv. 28, even as if one had clapped me on the back, as I was on my knees before God :

yet I was not able to believe this, that this was a prayer of faith, till almost six months after; for I could not think that I had faith, or that there should be a word for me to act faith on; therefore I should still be, as sticking in the jaws of desperation, and went mourning up and down in a sad condition.

202. There was nothing now that I longed for more than to be put out of doubt, as to this thing in question; and as I was vehemently desiring to know if there was indeed hope for me, these words came rolling into my mind: 'Will the Lord cast off for ever? and will he be favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever? Doth his promise fail for evermore? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?' Psalm lxxxvii. 7—9. And all the while they run in my mind, methought I had still this as the answer: 'Tis a question whether he hath or no: it may be he hath not. Yea, the interrogatory seemed to me to carry in it a sure affirmation that indeed he had not, nor would so cast off, but would be favourable: that his promise doth not fail, and that he hath not forgotten to be gracious, nor would in anger shut up tender mercy. Something also there was upon my heart at the same time, which I now cannot call to mind, which, with this text, did sweeten my heart, and make me conclude that this mercy might not be quite gone, nor gone for ever.

203. At another time I remembered, I was again much under this question, whether the blood of Christ was sufficient to save my soul? In which doubt I continued from morning till about seven or eight at night; and at last, when I was, as it were, quite worn out with fear, lest it should not lay hold on me, the words did sound suddenly within my heart, 'He is able:' but methought this word *able* was spoke loud unto me; it showed a great word, it seemed to be writ in great letters, and gave such a jostle to my fear and doubt (I mean for the time it tarried with me, which was

about a day,) as I never had from that, all my life, either before or after. Heb. vii. 25.

204. But one morning as I was again at prayer, and trembling under the fear of this, that no word of God could help me, that piece of a sentence darted in upon me, 'My grace is sufficient.' At this methought I felt some stay, as if there might be hopes. But, oh! how good a thing it is for God to send his word! for about a fortnight before, I was looking on this very place, and then I thought it could not come near my soul with comfort, therefore I threw down my book in a pet: then I thought it was not large enough for me; no, no! large enough; but now it was as if it had arms of grace so wide, that it could not only enclose me, but many more beside.

205. By these words I was sustained, yet not without exceeding conflicts, for the space of seven or eight weeks; for my peace would be in it, and out, sometimes twenty times a day; comfort now, and trouble presently; peace now, and before I could go a furlong, as full of fear and guilt as ever heart could hold: and this was not only now and then, but my whole seven weeks' experience: for this about the sufficiency of grace, and that of Esau's parting with his birthright, would be like a pair of scales within my mind; sometimes one end would be uppermost, and sometimes again the other: according to which would be my peace or troubles.

206. Therefore, I did still pray to God, that he would come in with his Scripture more fully on my heart; to wit, that he would help me to apply the whole sentence, for as yet I could not. That he gave, that I gathered; but further I could not go, for as yet it only helped me to hope there might be mercy for me, 'My grace is sufficient:' and though it came no farther, it answered my former question; to wit, that there was hope; yet because 'for thee,' was left out, I was not contented, but prayed to God for that also. Wherefore, one day, as I was in a meeting of God's people, full of sad

ness and terror; for my fears again were strong upon me; as I was now thinking my soul was never the better, but my case most sad and fearful, these words did with great power suddenly break in upon me; 'My grace is sufficient for thee! my grace is sufficient for thee! my grace is sufficient for thee!' three times together; and oh! methought that every word was a mighty word unto me; as *my*, and *grace*, and *sufficient*, and *for thee*; they were then, and sometimes are still, far bigger than others be.

207. At which time my understanding was so enlightened, that I was as though I had seen the Lord Jesus look down from heaven, through the tiles, upon me, and direct these words unto me. This sent me mourning home; it broke my heart, and filled me full of joy, and laid me low as the dust; only it stayed not long with me, I mean in this glory and refreshing comfort; yet it continued with me for several weeks, and did encourage me to hope: but as soon as that powerful operation of it was taken from my heart, that other, about Esau, returned upon me as before; so my soul did hang as in a pair of scales again, sometimes up and sometimes down; now in peace, and anon again in terror.

208. Thus I went on for many weeks, sometimes comforted, and sometimes tormented; and especially at sometimes my torments would be very sore, for all those scriptures aforenamed in the Hebrews would be set before me, as the only sentences that would keep me out of heaven. Then again I should begin to repent that ever that thought went through me; I should also think thus with myself: Why, how many scriptures are there against me? There are but three or four; and cannot God miss them, and save me for all them! Sometimes again I should think, Oh! if it were not for these three or four words, now how might I be comforted! and I could hardly forbear at some times, to wish them out of the book.

209. Then methought I should see as if both

Peter, and Paul, and John, and all the writers, did look with scorn upon me, and hold me in derision; and as they had said unto me, 'All our words are truth, one of as much force as the other: it is not we that have cut you off, but you have cast away yourself: there is none of our sentences that you must take hold upon but these, and such as these: It is impossible; there remains no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. vi. 'And it had been better for them not to have known the will of God, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them,' Heb. x. 'For the Scriptures cannot be broken,' 2 Pet.

210. These, the elders of the city of refuge, I saw, were to be the judges, both of my case and me, while I stood with the 'avenger of blood' at my heels, trembling at their gate for deliverance; also with a thousand fears and mistrusts, I doubted that he would shut me out for ever, Josh. xx. 3, 4.

211. Thus was I confounded, not knowing what to do, or how to be satisfied in this question, whether the Scriptures could agree with the salvation of my soul? I quaked at the apostles; I knew their words were true. and that they must stand for ever.

212. And I remember, one day, as I was in divers frames of spirit, and considering that these frames were according to the nature of several scriptures that came in upon my mind; if this of grace, then was I quiet; but if that of Esau, then tormented. Lord, thought I, if both these scriptures should meet in my heart at once, I wonder which of them would get the better of me. So methought I had a longing mind that they might come both together upon me; yea, I desired of God they might.

213. Well, about two or three days after, so they did indeed: they bolted both upon me at a time, and did work and struggle strongly in me for a while; at last that about Esau's birthright began to wax weak, and withdraw, and vanish; and this about the sufficiency of grace prevailed with peace and joy. And as I was in a muse about this thing,

that scripture came home upon me, 'Mercy rejoiceth over judgment,' James, ii. 13.

214. This was a wonderment to me, yet truly I am apt to think it was of God, for the word of the law and wrath must give place to the word of life and grace; because, though the word of condemnation be glorious, yet the word of life and salvation doth far exceed in glory, 2 Cor. iii. 8—11. Mark, ix. 5--7. John, vi. 37. Also that Moses and Elias must both vanish, and leave Christ and his saints alone.

215. This scripture did also now most sweetly visit my soul; 'And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' Oh! the comfort I had from this word, 'in no wise!' As who should say, by no means, for nothing whatever he hath done. But Satan would greatly labour to pull this promise from me, telling of me, that Christ did not mean me, and such as I, but sinners of a lower rank, that had not done as I had done. But I would answer him again, Satan, here is in these words no such exceptions, but him that cometh, him, any him: 'him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out.' And this I well remember still, that of all the sleights that Satan used to take this scripture from me, yet he never did so much as put this question, But do you come aright? And I have thought the reason was, because he thought I knew full well what coming aright was; for I saw, that to come aright, was to come as I was, a vile and ungodly sinner, and so cast myself at the feet of mercy, condemning myself for sin. If ever Satan and I did strive for any word of God in all my life, it was for this good word of Christ; he at one end, and I at the other: oh! what work we made! It was for this in John, I say, that we did so tug and strive; he pulled, and I pulled, but, God be praised, I overcame him; I got sweetness from it.

216. But notwithstanding all these helps, and blessed words of grace, yet that of Esau's selling of his birthright would still at times distress my conscience; for though I had been most sweetly

comforted, and that but just before, yet when that came into my mind, it would make me fear again; I could not be quite rid thereof. it would every day be with me: wherefore now I went another way to work, even to consider the nature of this blasphemous thought; I mean, if I should take the words at the largest, and give them their natural force and scope, even every word therein: so when I had thus considered, I found, that if they were fairly taken, they would amount to this: that I had freely left the Lord Jesus Christ to his choice. whether he would be my Saviour or no; for the wicked words were these, Let him go if he will. Then that scripture gave me hope, 'I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,' Heb. xiii. 5. O Lord, said I, but I have left thee. Then it answered again, 'But I will not leave thee.' For this I thanked God also.

217. Yet I was grievous afraid he should, and found it exceeding hard to trust him, seeing I had so offended him; I could have been exceeding glad that this thought had never befallen; for then I thought I could, with more ease and freedom in abundance, have leaned on his grace. I saw it was with me, as it was with Joseph's brethren; the guilt of their own wickedness did often fill them with fears that their brother would at last despise them, Gen. l. 15, 16, &c.

218. Yet above all the scriptures that I yet did meet with, that in Joshua, xx. was the greatest comfort to me, which speaks of the slayer that was to flee for refuge: 'And if the avenger of blood pursue the slayer, then, saith Moses, they that are the elders of the city of refuge shall not deliver him into his hands, because he smote his neighbour unwittingly, and hated him not aforetime.' Oh! blessed be God for this word: I was convinced that I was the slayer; and that the avenger of blood pursued me, I felt with great terror; only now it remained that I inquire whether I have right to enter the city of refuge: so I found, that he must not, who lay in wait to shed blood: it was

not the wilful murderer, but he who unwittingly did it. he who did it unawares; not out of spite, or grudge, or malice, he that shed it unwittingly; even he who did not hate his neighbour before. Wherefore,

219. I thought, verily, I was the man that must enter, because I had smitten my neighbour 'unwittingly, and hated him not aforetime.' I hated him not aforetime; no, I prayed unto him, was tender of sinning against him; yea, and against this wicked temptation I had strove for twelve months before; yea, and also when it did pass through my heart, it did in spite of my teeth: wherefore I thought I had a right to enter this city, and the elders, which are the apostles, were not to deliver me up. This, therefore, was great comfort to me, and gave me much ground of hope.

220. Yet being very critical, for my smart had made me that I knew not what ground was sure enough to bear me, I had one question that my soul did much desire to be resolved about; and that was, 'Whether it be possible for any soul that hath indeed sinned the unpardonable sin, yet after that to receive though but the least true spiritual comfort from God through Christ?' The which, after I had much considered, I found the answer was, 'No, they could not;' and that for these reasons:

221 First, Because those that have sinned that sin, they are debarred a share in the blood of Christ, and being shut out of that, they must needs be void of the least ground of hope, and so of spiritual comfort; 'For to such there remains no more sacrifice for sin,' Heb. x. 26, 27. Secondly, Because they are denied a share in the promise of life: 'They shall never be forgiven, neither in this world, nor in that which is to come,' Matt. xii. 31. Thirdly, the Son of God excludes them also from a share in his blessed intercession, being for ever ashamed to own them, both before his holy Father, and the blessed angels in heaven, Mark, viii.

222. When I had with much deliberation considered of this matter, and could not but conclude that the Lord had comforted me, and that too after this my wicked sin; then methought I durst venture to come nigh unto those most fearful and terrible scriptures, with which all this while I had been so greatly affrighted, and on which indeed, before, I durst scarce cast mine eye, (yea, had much ado, a hundred times, to forbear wishing them out of the Bible,) for I thought they would destroy me; but now, I say, I began to take some measure of encouragement to come close to them, to read them, and consider them, and to weigh their scope and tendency.

223. The which, when I began to do, I found my visage changed; for they looked not so grimly, as before I thought they did; and first I came to the 6th of Hebrews, yet trembling for fear it should strike me; which when I had considered, I found that the falling there intended, was a falling quite away; that is, as I conceived, a falling from, and an absolute denying of, the gospel, of remission of sins by Jesus Christ; for, from them the apostle begins his argument, verse 1—3. Secondly, I found that this falling away must be openly, even in the view of the world, even so as 'to put Christ to an open shame.' Thirdly, I found that those he there intended, were for ever shut up of God, both in blindness, hardness, and impenitency; 'It is impossible they should be renewed again unto repentance.' By all these particulars I found, to God's everlasting praise, my sin was not the sin in this place intended.

First, I confessed I was fallen, but was not fallen away; that is, from the profession of faith in Jesus unto eternal life.

Secondly, I confessed that I had put Jesus Christ to shame by my sin, but not to open shame; I did not deny him before men, nor condemn him as a fruitless one before the world.

Thirdly, nor did I find that God had shut me up, or denied me to come (though I found it hard work

indeed to come) to him by sorrow, and repentance; blessed be God for his unsearchable grace.

224. Then I considered that in the 10th chapter of the Hebrews, and found that the wilful sin there mentioned, is not every wilful sin, but that which doth throw off Christ, and then his commandments too. Secondly, That must be done also openly, before two or three witnesses, to answer that of the law, ver. 28. Thirdly, this sin cannot be committed, but with great despite done to the Spirit of grace; despising both the dissuasions from that sin, and the persuasions to the contrary. But the Lord knows, though this my sin was devilish, yet it did not amount to these.

225. And as touching that in the 12th chapter of the Hebrews, about Esau's selling of his birthright; though this was that which killed me, and stood like a spear against me, yet now I did consider, First, that his was not a hasty thought against the continual labour of his mind, but a thought consented to, and put in practice likewise, and that too after some deliberation, Gen. xxv. Secondly, It was a public and open action, even from his brother, if not before many more; this made his sin of a far more heinous nature than otherwise it would have been. Thirdly, he continued to slight his birthright: 'He did eat and drink, and went his way; thus Esau despised his birthright;' yea, twenty years after, he was found to despise it still. And Esau said, 'I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast thyself,' Genesis, xxxiii. 9.

226. Now as touching this, 'That Esau sought a place of repentance;' thus I thought: First, This was not for the birthright, but the blessing. This is clear from the apostle, and is distinguished by Esau himself: 'He hath taken away my birthright, (that is, formerly;) and now he hath taken away my blessing also,' Gen. xxvii. 36. Secondly, Now this being thus considered, I came again to the apostle, to see what might be the mind of God, in a New Testament style and sense, con-

cerning Esau's sin; and so far as I could conceive, this was the mind of God, 'That the birth-right signified regeneration, and the blessing, the eternal inheritance;' for so the apostle seems to hint: 'Lest there be any profane person, as Esau, who, for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright;' as if he should say, that shall cast off all those blessings of God that at present are upon him, in order to a new birth, lest they become as Esau, even be rejected afterward, when they should inherit the blessing.

227. For many there are, who, in the day of grace and mercy despise those things which are indeed the birthright to heaven, who yet, when the deciding day appears, will cry as loud as Esau, 'Lord, Lord, open to us;' but then, as Isaac would not repent, no more will God the Father, but will say, 'I have blessed these, yea, and they shall be blessed;' but as for you, 'Depart, you are the workers of iniquity,' Gen. xxvii. 32. Luke xiii. 25—27.

228. When I had thus considered these Scriptures, and found that thus to understand them, was not against, but according to other Scriptures, they still added further to my encouragement and comfort, and also gave a great blow to that objection, to wit, 'That the Scriptures could not agree in the salvation of my soul.' And now remained only the hinder part of the tempest, for the thunder was gone beyond me, only some drops did still remain, that now and then would fall upon me; but because my former fright and anguish were very sore and deep, therefore it oft befell me still, as it befalleth those that have been scared with fire, I thought every voice was Fire! Fire! every little touch would hurt my tender conscience.

229. But one day, as I was passing into the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven:' and methought withal, I

saw, with the eyes of my soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that, wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, 'He wants my righteousness,' for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, 'the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.' Heb. xiii. 8.

230. Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed; I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoicing, for the grace and love of God; so when I came home, I looked to see if I could find that sentence, 'Thy righteousness is in heaven,' but could not find such a saying; wherefore my heart began to sink again, only that was brought to my remembrance, 1 Cor. i. 30. 'He is made unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;' by this word I saw the other sentence true.

231. For by this scripture I saw that the man Jesus Christ, as he is distinct from us, as touching his bodily presence, so he is our righteousness and sanctification before God: here therefore I lived, for some time, very sweetly at peace with God through Christ. Oh! methought Christ! Christ! there was nothing but Christ that was before my eyes; I was not now (only) for looking upon this and the other benefits of Christ apart, as of his blood, burial, or resurrection, but considering him as a whole Christ! as he in whom all these, and all other his virtues, relations, offices, and operations, met together, and that he sat on the right hand of God in heaven.

232. 'Twas glorious to me to see his exaltation, and the worth and prevalency of all his benefits, and that because now I could look from

myself to him, and should reckon, that all those graces of God that now were green on me, were yet but like those cracked groats and four-pence halfpennies that rich men carry in their purses, when their gold is in their trunks at home. Oh! I saw my gold was in my trunk at home! in Christ my Lord and Saviour. Now Christ was all; all my wisdom, all my righteousness, all my sanctification, and all my redemption.

233. Further, the Lord did also lead me into the mystery of union with the Son of God; that I was joined to him, that I was flesh of his flesh, and bone of his bone; and now was that a sweet word to me, in Ephes. v. 30. By this also was my faith in him, as my righteousness, the more confirmed in me; for if he and I were one, then his righteousness was mine, his merits mine, his victory also mine. Now could I see myself in heaven and earth at once: in heaven by my Christ, by my head, by my righteousness and life, though on earth by my body or person.

234. Now I saw Christ Jesus was looked upon of God; and should also be looked upon by us, as that common or public person, in whom all the whole body of his elect are always to be considered and reckoned; that we fulfilled the law by him, died by him, rose from the dead by him, got the victory over sin, death, the devil, and hell, by him; when he died, we died, and so of his resurrection. 'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise,' saith he, Isa. xxvi. 19. And again, 'After two days he will revive us, and the third day we shall live in his sight,' Hosea, vi. 2, which is now fulfilled by the sitting down of the Son of Man on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, according to that to the Ephesians, 'He hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus,' Eph. ii. 6.

235. Ah! these blessed considerations and scriptures, with many others of like nature, were in those days made to spangle in mine eye, so that I have cause to say, 'Praise ye the Lord God in his

sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power; praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness, Psalms.

236. Having thus in few words given you a taste of the sorrow and affliction that my soul went under, by the guilt and terror that these my wicked thoughts did lay me under: and having given you also a touch of my deliverance therefrom, and of the sweet and blessed comfort that I met with afterward, which comfort dwelt about a twelve-month with my heart, to my unspeakable admiration; I will now, God willing, before I proceed any farther, give you, in a word or two, what, as I conceive, was the cause of this temptation; and also after that, what advantage, at the last, it became unto my soul.

237. For the causes, I conceived they were principally two: of which two also I was deeply convinced all the time this trouble lay upon me. The first was, For that I did not, when I was delivered from the temptation that went before, still pray to God to keep me from the temptations that were to come; for though, as I can say in truth, my soul was much in prayer before this trial seized me; yet then I prayed only, or at the most principally, for the removal of present troubles, and for fresh discoveries of his love in Christ, which I saw afterward was not enough to do; I also should have prayed that the great God would keep me from the evil that was to come.

238. Of this I was made deeply sensible by the prayer of holy David, who, when he was under present mercy, yet prayed that God would hold him back from sin and temptation to come: 'For then,' saith he, 'shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Psalm xix. 13. By this very word was I galled and condemned quite through this long temptation.

239. That was also another word that did much condemn me for my folly, in the neglect of this duty, Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us therefore come boldly

unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace, to help in time of need.' This I had not done, and therefore was thus suffered to sin and fall, according to what is written, 'Pray that ye enter not into temptation.' And truly this very thing is to this day of such weight and awe upon me, that I dare not, when I come before the Lord, go off my knees, until I entreat him for help and mercy against the temptations that are to come; and I do beseech thee, reader, that thou learn to beware of my negligence, by the afflictions that for this thing I did for days, and months, and years, with sorrow undergo.

240. Another cause of this temptation was, that I had tempted God; and in this manner did I do it: upon a time my wife was great with child, and before her full time was come, her pangs, as of a woman in travail, were fierce and strong upon her even as she would have immediately fallen in labour, and been delivered of an untimely birth: now at this very time it was, that I had been so strongly tempted to question the being of God; wherefore, as my wife lay crying by me, I said, but with all secrecy imaginable, even thinking in my heart, Lord, if now thou wilt remove this sad affliction from my wife, and cause that she be troubled no more therewith this night, (and now were her pangs just upon her,) then I shall know that thou canst discern the most secret thoughts of the heart.

241. I had no sooner said it in my heart, but her pangs were taken from her, and she was cast into a deep sleep, and so continued till morning; at this I gently marvelled, not knowing what to think; but after I had been awake a good while, and heard her cry no more, I fell asleep also; so when I waked in the morning, it came upon me again, even what I had said in my heart the last night, and how the Lord had showed me, that he knew my secret thoughts, which was a great astonishment unto me for several weeks after.

242. Well, about a year and a half afterward,

that wicked sinful thought of which I have spoken before, went through my wicked heart, even this thought, 'Let Christ go if he will:' so when I was fallen under guilt for this, the remembrance of my other thought, and effect thereof, would also come upon me with this retort, which also carried rebuke along with it, 'Now you may see that God doth know the most secret thoughts of the heart.'

243. And with this, that of the passages that were betwixt the Lord and his servant Gideon, fell upon my spirit; how because that Gideon tempted God with his fleece, both wet and dry, when he should have believed and ventured upon his words; therefore the Lord did afterward so try him, as to send him against an innumerable company of enemies, and that too, as to outward appearance, without any strength or help, Judges, vi. 19. Thus he served me, and that justly, for I should have believed his word, and not have put an *if* upon the all-seeingness of God.

244. And now to show you something of the advantages that I also have gained by this temptation: and first, by this I was made continually to possess in my soul a very wonderful sense both of the blessing and glory of God, and of his beloved Son; in the temptation that went before, my soul was perplexed with unbelief, blasphemy, hardness of heart, questions about the being of God, Christ, the truth of the word, and certainty of the world to come: I say, then I was greatly assaulted and tormented with atheism, but now the case was otherwise; now was God and Christ continually before my face, though not in the way of comfort, but in a way of exceeding dread and terror. The glory of the holiness of God did at times break me to pieces; and the bowels and compassion of Christ did break me as on the wheel; for I could not consider him but as a lost and rejected Christ, the remembrance of which was as the continual breaking of my bones.

245. The Scriptures also were wonderful things unto me; I saw that the truth and variety of them

were the keys of the kingdom of Heaven; those that the Scripture favour, they must inherit bliss; but those that they oppose and condemn, must perish for evermore: Oh! this word, 'For the Scriptures cannot be broken,' would rend the caul of my heart: and so would that other, 'Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted; but whose sins ye retain, they are retained.' Now I saw the apostles to be the elders of the city of refuge, Joshua, xx. 4. Those that they were to receive in, were received to life; but those that they shut out, were to be slain by the avenger of blood.

246. Oh! one sentence of the Scripture did more afflict and terrify my mind, I mean those sentences that stood against me (as sometimes I thought they every one did) more, I say, than an army of forty thousand men that might have come against me. Wo be to him against whom the Scriptures bend themselves!

247. By this temptation I was made to see, ore into the nature of the promises than ever I had before; for I was lying now trembling under the mighty hand of God, continually torn and rent by the thundering of his Justice; this made me with careful heart, and watchful eye, with great fearfulness, to turn over every leaf, and with much diligence, mixed with trembling, to consider every sentence, together with its natural force and latitude.

248. By this temptation also I was greatly holden off from my former foolish practice of putting by the word of promise when it came into my hand; for now, though I could not suck that comfort and sweetness from the promise, as I had done at other times, yet, like to a man sinking, I should catch at all I saw: formerly I thought I might not meddle with the promise, unless I felt its comfort, but now it was no time thus to do; the avenger of blood too hardly did pursue me.

249. Now therefore was I glad to catch at that word which yet I feared I had no ground or right to own; and even to leap into the bosom of that promise that yet I feared did shut his heart against

me. Now also I would labour to take the word as God hath laid it down, without restraining the natural force of one syllable thereof; O! what did I now see in that blessed 6th chapter of St. John: 'And him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out,' John vi. 37. Now I began to consider with myself, that God hath a bigger mouth to speak with than I had a heart to conceive with; I thought also with myself, that he spake not his words in haste, or in an unadvised heat, but with infinite wisdom and judgment, and in very truth and faithfulness, 2 Sam. lii. 28.

250. I would in these days, often in my greatest agonies, even flounce toward the promise (as the horses do toward sound ground, that yet stick in the mire,) concluding (though as one almost bereft of his wits through fear) on this will I rest and stay, and leave the fulfilling of it to the God of heaven that made it. Oh! many a pull hath my heart had with Satan for that blessed 6th chapter of St. John; I did not now, as at other times, look principally for comfort, though, O how welcome would it have been unto me! But now a word to lean a weary soul upon, that it might not sink for ever! 'twas that I hunted for.

251. Yea, often when I have been making to the promise, I have seen as if the Lord would refuse my soul for ever; I was often as if I had run upon the pikes, and as if the Lord had thrust at me, to keep me from him, as with a flaming sword. Then would I think of Esther, who went to petition the king contrary to the law, Esther iv. 16. I thought also of Benhadad's servants, who went with ropes upon their heads to their enemies for mercy, 1 Kings, xx. 31, &c. The woman of Canaan also, that would not be daunted, though called dog by Christ, Matt. xv. 26, &c. and the man that went to borrow bread at midnight, Luke, i. 5—8, &c. were also great encouragements unto me.

252. I never saw those heights and depths in grace, and love, and mercy, as I saw after this temptation; great sins to draw out great grace;

and where guilt is most terrible and fierce, there the mercy of God in Christ, when showed to the soul, appears most high and mighty. When Job had passed through his captivity, 'he had twice as much as he had before,' Job xlii. 10. Blessed be God for Jesus Christ our Lord. Many other things I might here make observation of, but I would be brief, and therefore shall at this time omit them; and do pray God that my harms may make others fear to offend, lest they also be made to bear the iron yoke as I did. I had two or three times, at or about my deliverance from this temptation, such strange apprehensions of the grace of God, that I could hardly bear up under it. It was so out of measure amazing, when I thought it could reach me, that I do think if that sense of it had abode long upon me, it would have made me incapable for business.

253. Now I shall go forward to give you a relation of other of the Lord's dealings with me at sundry other seasons, and of the temptations I then did meet withal. I shall begin with what I met with when first I did join in fellowship with the people of God in Bedford. After I had propounded to the church, that my desire was to walk in the order and ordinances of Christ with them, and was also admitted by them: while I thought of that blessed ordinance of Christ, which was his last supper with his disciples before his death, that Scripture, 'Do this in remembrance of me,' Luke xxii. 19, was made a very precious word unto me: for by it the Lord did come down upon my conscience with the discovery of his death for my sins, and as I then felt, did as if he plunged me in the virtue of the same. But behold, I had not been long a partaker at the ordinance, but such fierce and sad temptation did attend me at all times therein, both to blaspheme the ordinance, and to wish some deadly thing to those that then did eat thereof, that lest I should at any time be guilty of consenting to these wicked and fearful thoughts, I was forced to bend myself all the

while, to pray to God to keep me from such blasphemies: and also to cry to God to bless the cup and bread to them, as it were from mouth to mouth. The reason of this temptation, I have thought since, was, because I did not with that reverence that became me at first approach to partake thereof.

254. Thus I continued for three quarters of a year, and could never have rest nor ease: but at the last the Lord came in upon my soul with that same Scripture, by which my soul was visited before: and after that I have been usually very well and comfortable in the partaking of that blessed ordinance; and have, I trust, therein discerned the Lord's body, as broken for my sins, and that his precious blood hath been shed for my transgressions.

255. Upon a time I was somewhat inclining to a consumption, wherewith about the spring I was suddenly and violently seized with much weakness in my outward man, insomuch that I thought I could not live. Now began I afresh to give myself up to a serious examination after my state and condition for the future, and of my evidence for that blessed world to come: for it hath, I bless the name of God, been my usual course, as always, so, especially in the day of affliction, to endeavour to keep my interest in the life to come, clear before mine eyes.

256. But I had no sooner began to recall to mind my former experience of the goodness of God to my soul, but there came flocking into my mind an innumerable company of my sins and transgressions; amongst which these were at this time most to my affliction, namely, my deadness, dullness, and coldness in holy duties; my wanderings of heart, of my wearisomeness in all good things, my want of love to God, his ways, and people, with this at the end of all, 'Are these the fruits of Christianity? Are these tokens of a blessed man?'

257. At the apprehensions of these things my sickness was double upon me, for now I was sick

in my inward man, my soul was clogged with guilt; now also was my former experience of God's goodness to me quite taken out of my mind, and hid as if they had never been, or seen: now was my soul greatly pitched between these two considerations, 'Live I must not, die I dare not.' Now I sunk and fell in my spirit, and was giving up all for lost; but as I was walking up and down in the house, as a man in a most woful state, that word of God took hold of my heart, 'Ye are justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,' Rom. iii, 24. But oh! what a turn it made upon me!

258. Now was I as one awaked out of some troublesome sleep and dream; and listening to this heavenly sentence, I was as if I had heard it thus spoken to me: 'Sinner, thou thinkest, that because of thy sins and infirmities, I cannot save thy soul; but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on thee, and shall deal with thee according as I am pleased with him.' At this I was greatly enlightened in my mind, and made to understand, that God could justify a sinner at any time; it was but his looking upon Christ and imputing of his benefits to us, and the work was forthwith done.

259. And as I was thus in a muse, that Scripture also came with great power upon my spirit, 'Not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he hath saved us,' &c. 2 Tim. i. 9. Tit. iii, 5. Now was I got on high; I saw myself within the arms of grace and mercy; and though I was before afraid to think of a dying hour, yet now I cried, 'Let me die:' now death was lovely and beautiful in my sight, for I saw we shall never live indeed till we be gone to the other world. Oh! methought this life is but a slumber, in comparison of that above. At this time also I saw more in these words: 'Heirs of God!' Rom. viii, 17, than ever I shall be able to express while I live in this world. 'Heirs of God!' God himself is the portion of the

saints. This I saw and wondered at, but cannot tell you what I saw.

260. Again, as I was at another time very ill and weak, all that time also the tempter did beset me strongly, (for I find he is much for assaulting the soul when it begins to approach toward the grave, then is his opportunity,) labouring to hide from me my former experience of God's goodness; also setting before me the terrors of death, and the judgment of God, insomuch that at this time, through my fear of miscarrying for ever, (should I now die,) I was as one dead before death came, and was as if I had felt myself already descending into the pit; methought I said there was no way, but to hell I must; but behold, just as I was in the midst of those fears, these words of the angels carrying Lazarus into Abraham's bosom darted in upon me, as who should say, 'So it shall be with thee when thou dost leave this world.' This did sweetly revive my spirits, and help me to hope in God; which when I had with comfort mused on awhile, that word fell with great weight upon my mind, 'O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!' 1 Cor. xv, 55. At this I became both well in body and mind at once, for my sickness did presently vanish, and I walked comfortably in my work for God again.

261. At another time, though just before I was pretty well, and savoury in my spirit, yet suddenly there fell upon me a great cloud of darkness, which did so hide from me the things of God and Christ, that I was as if I had never seen or known them in my life. I was also so overrun in my soul with a senseless, heartless frame of spirit, that I could not feel my soul to move or stir after grace and life by Christ: I was as if my loins were broken, or as if my hands and feet had been tied or bound with chains. At this time also I felt some weakness to seize upon my outward man, which made still the other affliction the more heavy and uncomfortable to me.

262. After I had been in this condition some three or four days, as I was sitting by the fire, I suddenly felt this word to sound in my heart, 'I must go to Jesus : ' at this my former darkness and atheism fled away, and the blessed things of heaven were set in my view. While I was on this sudden thus overtaken with surprise, 'Wife,' said I, 'is there ever such a scripture, I must go to Jesus?' She said, she could not tell, therefore I sat musing still, to see if I could remember such a place: I had not sat above two or three minutes, but that came bolting in upon me, 'And to an innumerable company of angels;' and withal the xiith chapter of Hebrews, about the Mount Sion, was set before mine eyes, Heb. xii, 22—24.

263. Then with joy I told my wife, 'Oh ! now I know, I know ! ' But that night was a good night to me; I never had but few better ; I longed for the company of some of God's people, that I might have imparted unto them what God had showed me. Christ was a precious Christ to my soul that night ; I could scarce lie in my bed for joy, and peace, and triumph through Christ. This great glory did not continue upon me until morning, yet the xiith chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Heb. xii. 22, 23, was a blessed scripture to me for many days together after this.

264. The words are these: 'Ye are come to Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven; to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the New Testament, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.' Through this sentence the Lord led me over and over, first to this word, and then to that; and showed me wonderful glory in every one of them. These words also have oft since that time been great refreshment to my spirit: blessed be God for having mercy on me !

*A Brief Account of the Author's Call to the
Work of the Ministry.*

265. And now I am speaking my experience, I will in this place thrust in a word or two concerning my preaching the word, and of God's dealing with me in that particular also. After I had been about five or six years awakened, and helped to see both the want and worth of Jesus Christ our Lord, and to venture my soul upon him; some of the most able among the saints with us for judgment and holiness of life, as they conceived, did perceive that God counted me worthy to understand something of his will in his holy word, and had given me utterance to express what I saw to others, for edification; therefore they desired me, with much earnestness, that I would be willing, at some times, to take in hand, in one of the meetings, to speak a word of exhortation unto them.

266. The which, though at the first it did much dash and abash my spirit, yet being still by them desired and entreated, I consented, and did twice, at two several assemblies, but in private, though with much weakness, discover my gift amongst them; at which they did solemnly protest, as in the sight of the great God, they were both affected and comforted; and gave thanks to the Father of mercies, for the grace bestowed on me.

267. After this, sometimes, when some of them did go into the country to teach, they would also that I should go with them; where though, as yet I durst not make use of my gifts in an open way, yet more privately, as I came amongst the good people in those places, I did sometimes speak a word of admonition unto them also; the which they received with rejoicing at the mercy of God to me-ward, professing their souls were edified thereby.

268. Wherefore, to be brief, at last, being still desired by the church, I was more particularly called forth, and appointed to a more ordinary and public preaching of the word, not only to and

amongst them that believed, but also to offer the Gospel to those who had not yet received the faith thereof: about which time I did evidently find in my mind a secret pricking forward thereto; though at that time I was most sorely afflicted with fiery darts of the devil concerning my eternal state.

269. But yet I could not be content, unless I was found in the exercise of my gift, but also by that saying of Paul to the Corinthians; 'I beseech you, brethren, (you know the household of Stephanus, that is the first-fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,) that ye submit yourselves unto such, and to every one that helpeth with us, and labour-eth,' 1 Cor. xvi. 15, 16.

270. By this text I was made to see that the Holy Ghost never intended that men who have gifts and abilities should bury them in the earth, but rather did stir up such to the exercise of their gift, and also did commend those that were apt and ready so to do. 'They have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints:' this scripture did continually run in my mind, to encourage and strengthen me in this work for God. I have also been encouraged from other scriptures, and examples of the godly, both specified in the word, and other ancient histories, Acts, viii. 4. xviii. 24, 25. 1 Pet. 4, 10. Rom. xii. 6. Fox's Acts and Monuments.

271. Wherefore, though of myself, of all the saints the most unworthy, yet I, with great fear, and trembling at my own weakness, did set upon the work, and did, according to my gifts, preach that blessed gospel that God hath shown me in the holy word of truth: which when the country understood, they came in to hear the word by hundreds, and that from all parts, though upon divers and sundry accounts.

272. And I thank God he gave unto me some measure of bowels and pity for their souls, which also put me forward to labour with great ear-

nestness, to find out such a word as might, if God would bless it, awaken the conscience, in which also the good Lord had respect to the desire of his servant; for I had not preached long before some began to be greatly afflicted in their minds, at the greatness of their sin, and of their need of Jesus Christ.

273. But I first could not believe that God should speak by me to the heart of any man, still counting myself unworthy; yet those who were thus touched, would have a particular respect for me; and though I did put it from me, that they should be awakened by me, still they would affirm it before the saints of God: they would also bless God for me, (unworthy wretch that I am!) and count me God's instrument, that showed to them the way of salvation.

274. Wherefore seeing them in both their words and deeds to be so constant, and earnestly pressing, after the knowledge of Jesus Christ, rejoicing that ever God did send me where they were; then I began to conclude that God had owned in his work such a foolish one as I; and then came that word of God to my heart, with much sweet refreshment, 'The blessing of them that were ready to perish, is come upon me; yea, I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy;' Job, xxix. 13.

275. At this therefore I rejoiced; yea, the tears of those whom God did awaken by my preaching, would be both solace and encouragement to me; I thought on those things, 'Who is he that maketh me glad, but the same that it made sorry by me?' 2 Cor. And again, 'Though I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am unto you; for the seal of my apostleship are ye in the Lord,' 1 Cor. vi. These things, therefore, were as another argument unto me, that God had called me to, and stood by me in this work.

276. In my preaching of the word, I took special notice of this one thing, namely, that the Lord did lead me to begin where his word begins with sinners; that is, to condemn all flesh, and to open

and allege, that the curse of God by the law, doth belong to, and lay hold on all men as they come into the world, because of sin. Now this part of my work I fulfilled with great sense; for the terrors of the law, and guilt for my transgressions, lay heavy on my conscience; I preached what I felt, what I smartingly did feel! even that under which my poor soul did groan and tremble to astonishment.

277. Indeed I have been as one sent to them from the dead; I went myself in chains, to preach to them in chains; and carried that fire in my own conscience, that I persuaded them to be aware of. I can truly say, and that without dissembling, that when I have been to preach, I have gone full of guilt and terror, even to the pulpit-door, and there it hath been taken off, and I have been at liberty in my mind until I have done my work: and then immediately, even before I could get down the pulpit-stairs, I have been as bad as I was before; yet God carried me on, but surely with a strong hand, for neither guilt nor hell could take me off my work.

278 Thus I went on for the space of two years, crying out against men's sins, and their fearful state because of them. After which the Lord came in upon my own soul, with some sure peace and comfort through Christ; wherefore now I altered in my preaching, (for still I preached what I saw and felt;) now therefore I did much labour to hold with Jesus Christ in all his offices, relations, and benefits unto the world, and did strive also to condemn, and remove those false supports and props on which the world doth lean, and by them fall and perish. On these things also I staid as long as on the other.

279. After this, God led me into something of the mystery of the union of Christ; wherefore that I discovered and showed to them also. And, when I had travelled through these three points of the word of God, about the space of five years or more, I was caught in my present practice, and cast into

prison, where I have lain above as long again to confirm the truth by way of suffering, as I was before in testifying of it according to the Scriptures, in a way of preaching.

280. When I have been preaching, I thank God, my heart hath often, with great earnestness, cried to God that he would make the work effectual to the salvation of the soul; still being grieved lest the enemy should take the word away from the conscience, and so it shall become unfruitful: wherefore I shall labour to speak the word, as that thereby, if it were possible, the sin and person guilty might be particularized by it.

281. And when I have done the exercise, it hath gone to my heart, to think the word should now fall as rain on stony places; still wishing from my heart, Oh! that they who have heard me speak this day, did but see as I do, what sin, death, hell, and the curse of God is; and also what the grace, and love, and mercy of God is, through Christ, to men in such a case as they are, who are yet estranged from him. And indeed, I did often say in my heart before the Lord, 'That if I be hanged up presently before their eyes, it would be a means to awaken them, and confirm them in the truth, and I gladly shall be contented.'

282. For I have been in my preaching, especially when I have been engaged in the doctrine of life by Christ, without works as if an angel of God had stood at my back to encourage me: Oh! it hath been with such power and heavenly evidence upon my own soul, while I have been labouring to unfold it, to demonstrate it and to fasten upon the consciences of others, that I could not be contented with saying, 'I believe and am sure:' methought I was more than sure (if it be lawful to express myself) that those things which then I asserted, were true.

283. When I first went to preach the word abroad, the doctors and priests of the country did open wide against me; but I was persuaded of this, not to render railing for railing; but to see

how many of their carnal professors I could convince of their miserable state by the law, and of the want and worth of Christ; for, thought I, 'That shall answer for me in time to come, when they shall be for my hire before their face,' Gen. xxx. 33.

284. I never cared to meddle with things that were controverted, and in dispute among the saints, especially things of the lowest nature; yet it pleased me much to contend with great earnestness for the word of faith, and the remission of sins by the death and sufferings of Jesus: but I say, as to other things, I would let them alone, because I saw they engendered strife; and because that they neither in doing, nor in leaving undone, did commend us to God to be his: besides I saw my work before me did run into another channel, even to carry an awakening word; to that therefore I did stick and adhere.

285. I never endeavoured to, nor durst make use of other men's lines, Rom. xv. 18, (though I condemn not all that do,) for I verily thought, and found by experience, that what was taught me by the word and Spirit of Christ, could be spoken, maintained, and stood to, by the soundest and best established conscience; and though I will not now speak all that I know in this matter, yet my experience hath more interest in that text of Scripture, Gal. 1. 11, 12, than many amongst men are aware.

286. If any of those who were awakened by my ministry did after that fall back, (as sometimes too many did,) I can truly say, their loss hath been more to me than if my own children, begotten of my own body, had been going to their grave: I think verily, I may speak it without any offence to the Lord, nothing has gone so near me as that; unless it was the fear of the loss of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born: my heart hath been so wrapped up in the glory of this excellent work, that I

counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this, than if he had made me the emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it! Oh, these words! 'He that converteth a sinner from the error of his way, doth save a soul from death,' James, v. 20. 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise,' Prov. xi. 30. 'They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever,' Dan. xii. 3. 'For what is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not ye even in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy;' 1 Thess. ii. 19, 20. These I say, with many others of a like nature, have been great refreshments to me.

287. I have observed, that where I have had a work to do for God, I have first, as it were, the going of God upon my spirit, to desire I might preach there: I have also observed, that such and such souls, in particular, have been strongly set upon my heart, and I stirred up to wish for their salvation; and that these very souls have, after this, been given in the fruits of my ministry. I have observed, that a word cast in by the by hath done more execution in a sermon, than all that was spoken beside: sometimes also, when I have thought I did no good, then I did the most of all; and at other times, when I thought I could catch them, I have fished for nothing.

288. I have also observed, that where there has been a work to do upon sinners, there the devil hath begun to roar in their hearts; yea, oftentimes, when the wicked world hath raged most, there hath been souls awakened by the word: I could instance particulars, but I forbear.

289. My great desire in my fulfilling my ministry, was to get into the darkest places of the country, even amongst those people that were farthest off of profession; yet not because I could not endure the light (for I feared not to show my

gospel to any,) but because I found my spirit did lean most after awakening and converting work, and the word that I carried did lean itself most that way also; 'Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation.' Rom. xv. 20.

290. In my preaching, I have really been in pain, and have, as it were, travelled to bring forth children to God; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruits did appear in my work. If I were fruitless, it mattered not who commended me; but if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. I have thought of that, 'Lo! children are an heritage of the Lord; and the fruits of the womb is his reward. As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate,' Psalm cxxvii. 3—5.

291. It pleased me nothing to see people drink in opinions, if they seemed ignorant of Jesus Christ, and the worth of their own salvation. Sound conviction for sin, especially unbelief, and a heart set on fire to be saved by Christ, with strong breathings after a truly sanctified soul: that it was that delighted me; those were the souls I counted blessed.

292. But in this work, as in all other, I had my temptations attending me, and that of divers kinds; as sometimes I should be assaulted with great discouragement therein, fearing that I should not be able to speak a word at all to edification. nay, that I should not be able to speak sense to the people; at which times I should have such a strange faintness seize upon my body, that my legs have scarce been able to carry me to the place of exercise.

293. Sometimes, when I have been preaching, I have been violently assaulted with thoughts of blasphemy, and strongly tempted to speak the words with my mouth before the congregation.

I have also at times, even when I have begun to speak the word with much clearness, evidence, and liberty of speech, been, before the ending of that opportunity, so blinded, and so estranged from the things I have been speaking, and have been also so straitened in my speech, as to utterance before the people, that I have been as if I had not known what I have been about; or as if my head had been in a bag all the time of my exercise.

294. Again, when as sometimes I have been about to preach upon some smart and searching portion of the word, I have found the emptier suggest, 'What! will you preach this! This condemns yourself; of this your own soul is guilty; wherefore preach not of this at all; or if you do, yet so mince it, as to make way for your own escape; lest, instead of awakening others, you lay that guilt upon your own soul that you will never get from under.'

295. But, I thank the Lord, I have been kept from consenting to these so horrid suggestions, and have rather, as Samson, bowed myself with all my might to condemn sin and transgression, wherever I found it; yea, though therein also I did bring guilt upon my own conscience: 'Let me die,' thought I, 'with the Philistines,' Judges, xvi. 29, 30, rather than deal corruptly with the blessed word of God. 'Thou that teachest another, teachest not thou thyself?' It is far better then to judge thyself, even by preaching plainly unto others, than that thou, to save thyself, imprison the truth in unrighteousness. Blessed be God for his help also in this.

296. I have also, while found in this blessed work of Christ, been often tempted to pride and liftings up of heart; and, though I dare not say I have not been affected with this, yet truly the Lord of his precious mercy, hath so carried it toward me, that I have had small joy to give way to such a thing: for it hath been my every day's portion to be let into the evil of my own

heart, and still made to seek such a multitude of 'corruptions and infirmities therein, that it hath caused hanging down of the head under all my gifts and attainments: I have felt this thorn in the flesh, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, the very mercy of God to me.

297. I have also had, together with this, some notable place or other of the word presented before me, which word hath contained in it some sharp and piercing sentence concerning the perishing of the soul, notwithstanding gifts and parts; as for instance, that hath been of great use to me, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal,' 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2.

298. A tinkling cymbal is an instrument of music, with which a skilful player can make such melodious and heart-inflaming music, that all who hear him play, can scarcely hold from dancing; and yet behold the cymbal hath not life, neither comes the music from it, but because of the art of him that plays therewith; so then the instrument at last may come to naught and perish, though in times past such music hath been made upon it.

299. Just thus I saw it was, and will be, with them that have gifts, but want saving grace; they are in the hand of Christ, as the cymbal in the hand of David; and as David could with the cymbal make that mirth in the service of God as to elevate the hearts of the worshippers, so Christ can use these gifted men, as with them to effect the souls of his people in his church; yet when he hath done all, hang them by, as lifeless, though sounding cymbals.

300. This consideration, together with some others, were, for the most part, as a maul on the head of pride, and desire of vain glory. What, thought I, shall I be proud because I am a sounding brass? Is it so much to be a fiddle? Hath not the least creature that hath life more of God in it

than these? So I concluded, a little grace, and a little of the true fear of God, is better than all the gifts: yea, I am fully convinced of it, that it is possible for souls that can scarce give a man an answer, but with great confusion as to method; I say, it is as possible for them to have a thousand times more grace, and so to be more in the love and favour of the Lord, than some who, by the virtue of the gift of knowledge, can deliver themselves like angels.

301. Thus therefore I came to perceive, that though gifts in themselves were good, to the thing for which they are designed, to wit, the edification of others, yet empty, and without power to save the soul of him that hath them, if they be alone. Neither are they, as so, any sign of a man's state, to be happy, being only a dispensation of God to some, of whose improvement, or non-improvement, they must, when a little love more is over, give an account to him, that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

302. This showed me too, that gifts being alone, were dangerous, not in themselves, but because of those evils that attend them that have them; to wit, pride, desire of vain-glory, self-conceit, &c. all which are easily blown up at the applause and commendation of every unadvised Christian, to the endangering of a poor creature to fall into the condemnation of the devil.

303. I saw, therefore, that he that hath gifts, had need to be let into a sight of the nature of them, to wit, that they come short of making of him to be in a truly saved condition, lest he rest in them, and so fall short of the grace of God.

304. He hath caused also to walk humbly with God, and be little in his own eyes, and to remember withal, that his gifts are not his own, but the church's; and that by them he is made a servant to the church; and he must give at last an account of his stewardship unto the Lord Jesus; and to give a good account will be a blessed thing.

305. Let all men therefore prize a little with the fear of the Lord ; (gifts indeed are desirable) but yet great grace and small gifts are better than great gifts and no grace. It doth not say, the Lord gives gifts and glory, but the Lord gives grace and glory ; and blessed is such a one, to whom the Lord gives grace, true grace, for that is a certain forerunner of glory.

306. But when Satan perceived that his thus tempting and assaulting of me would not answer his design, to wit, to overthrow the ministry, and make it ineffectual, as to the ends thereof, then he tried another way, which was, to stir up the minds of the ignorant and malicious to load me with slander and reproaches. Now therefore I may say, that what the devil could devise, and his instruments invent, was whirled up and down the country against me, thinking, as I said, that by that means they should make my ministry to be abandoned.

307. It began therefore to be rumoured up and down among the people, that I was a witch, a jesuit, a highwayman, and the like.

308. To all which, I shall only say, God knows that I am innocent. But as for mine accusers, let them provide themselves to meet me before the tribunal of the Son of God, there to answer for all these things, (with all the rest of their iniquities,) unless God shall give them repentance for them, for the which I pray with all my heart.

309. But that which was reported with the boldest confidence, was, That I had my misses, my whores, my bastards ; yea, two wives at once, and the like. Now these slanders (with the others) I glory in, because but slanders, foolish, or knavish lies, and falsehoods cast upon me by the devil and his seed ! and should I not be dealt with thus wickedly by the world, I should want one sign of a saint, and a child of God : 'Blessed are you,' said the Lord Jesus 'when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all

manner of evil of you falsely for my sake; rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for 'so persecuted they the prophets which were before you,' Matt. iv. 11.

310. These things therefore, upon mine own account, trouble me not: no, though they were twenty times more than they are. I have a good conscience; and whereas they speak of me as an evil doer, they shall be ashamed that falsely accuse my good conversation in Christ.

311. So then, what shall I say to those who have thus bespattered me? Shall I threaten them? Shall I chide them? Shall I entreat them to hold their tongues? No, not I. Were it not for that these things made them ripe for damnation, that are the authors and abettors, I would say unto them, 'Report it,' because it will increase my glory.

312. therefore I bind these lies and slanders to me as an ornament; it belongs to my Christian profession to be vilified, slandered, reproached, and reviled; and since all, that is nothing else, as my God and my conscience do bear me witness, I rejoice in reproaches for Christ's sake.

313. I also call all those fools and knaves that have thus made it their business to affirm any of these things of me; namely, that I have been naught with other women or the like. When they have used the utmost of their endeavours that they can, to prove against me truly, that there is any woman in heaven, earth, or hell, that can say I have at any time, in any place, by day or night, so much as attempted to be naught with them; and speak I thus to beg mine enemies into a good esteem of me? No, not I: I will in this beg relief of no man: believe or disbelieve me in this, all is a case to me.

314. My foes have missed their mark in this their shooting at me. I am not the man. I wish that they themselves be guiltless. If all the fornicators and adulterers in England were hanged

up by the neck till they be dead, John Bunyan, the object of their envy, would be still alive and well: I know not whether there be such a thing as a woman breathing under the copes of the heaven, out by their apparel, their children, or by common fame, except my wife.

315. And in this I admire the wisdom of God, that he made me shy of women. These know, with whom I have been most intimately concerned, that it is a rare thing to see me carry it pleasantly toward a woman; the common salutation of women I abhor, 'tis odious to me in whomsoever I see it. Their company alone, I cannot away with; I seldom so much as touch a woman's hand, for I think these things are not so becoming me. When I have seen good men salute those women that they have visited, or that have visited them, I have at times made my objection against it; and when they have answered, that it was but a piece of civility, I have told them, it is not a comely sight. Some indeed have urged the holy kiss; but then I have asked why they made barks, why then did they salute the most handsome, and let the ill-favoured go: thus, how laudable so ever such things have been in the eyes of others, they have been unseemly in my sight.

316. And now for a wind up in this matter, I calling not only men, but angels, to prove me guilty of having carnally to do with any woman, save my wife; nor am I afraid to call God for a record upon my soul, that in these things I am innocent. Not that I have been thus kept, because of any goodness in me, more than any other, but God has been merciful to me, and has kept me, to whom I pray that he will keep me still, not only from this but every evil way and work, and preserve me in his heavenly kingdom. Amen.

317. Now as Satan laboured, by reproaches and slanders, to make me vile among my countrymen, that, if possible, my preaching might be

made of none effect, so thereby was added there-to a long and tedious imprisonment, that thereby I might be frightened from my service for Christ, and the world terrified and made afraid to hear me preach, of which I shall in the next place give you a brief account.

A Brief account of the Author's Imprisonment.

318. HAVING made profession of the glorious gospel of Christ, and preached the same about five years, I was apprehended at a meeting of good people in the country, (among whom I should have preached that day, but they took me from amongst them,) and had me before a justice; who, after I had offered security for my appearance the next sessions, yet committed me, because my sureties would not consent to be bound that I should preach no more to the people.

319. At the sessions after, I was indicted for a maintainer of unlawful assemblies and conventicles, and for not conforming to the church of England; and, after some conference *there* with the justices, they taking my plain dealing with them for a confession, as they termed it, *of the indictment, did sentence me to a perpetual banishment, because I refused to conform.* So being again delivered up to the gaoler's hands, I was had to prison, and there laid a complete twelve years, waiting to see what God would suffer these men to do with me.

320. In which condition I have continued with much content, through grace, but have met with many turnings and goings upon my heart, both from the Lord, Satan, and my own corruption; by all which (glory be to Jesus Christ) I have also received much conviction, instruction, and understanding, of which I shall not here discourse; only give you a hint or two, that may stir up the godly to bless God, and to pray for me; and also to take encouragement, should the case be their own, 'not to fear what man can do unto them.'

321. I never had, in all my life, so great an inlet into the word of God as now; those Scriptures that I saw nothing in before, were made now to shine upon me; Jesus Christ also was never more apparent than now; here I have seen and felt him indeed: Oh! that word, 'We have not preached unto you cunningly devised fables,' 2 Pet. i. 16, and that, 'God raised Christ from the dead, and gave him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Pet. i. 3, were blessed words unto me in this imprisoned condition.

322. These three or four scriptures also have been great refreshments in this condition to me; John xiv. 1—4. xvi. 33. Col. iii. 3, 4. Heb. xii. 22—24. So that sometimes when I have been in the favour of them, I have been able to laugh at destruction, 'and to fear neither the horse nor his rider.' I have had sweet sights of the forgiveness of my sins in this place, and of my being with Jesus in another world: I have seen *that* here, that I am persuaded I shall never, while in this world, be able to express: I have seen a truth in this scripture, 'Whom having not seen, yet love: in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' 1 Pet. i. 8.

323. I never knew what it was for God to stand by me at all turns, and at every offer of Satan to afflict me, as I have found since I came in hither: for as fears have presented themselves, so have supports and encouragements; yea, when I have started at nothing else but my shadow, yet God hath not suffered me to be molested, but would with one scripture or another strengthen me against all; insomuch that I have often said, 'Were it lawful, I could pray for greater trouble for the greater comfort's sake,' Eccles. vii. 14. 2 Cor. i. 5.

324. Before I came to prison, I saw what was coming, and had two considerations warm upon my heart: the first was, How to be able to encounter death, should that be my portion. For

the first of these, that scripture, Col. 1. 11, was great information to me, namely, to pray to God 'to be strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' I could seldom go to prayer, but his sentence or sweet petition would thrust itself into my mind, and persuade me, that if ever I would go through long-suffering, I must have patience, especially if I would endure it joyfully.

325. As to the second consideration, that saying (2 Cor. 1. 9,) was of great use to me: 'But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we might not trust in ourselves, but in God, that raised the dead.' By this scripture I was made to see, that if ever I would suffer rightly, I must first pass a sentence of death upon every thing that can properly be called a thing of this life, even to reckon myself, my wife, my children, my health, my enjoyments, and all, as dead to me, and myself as dead to them.

326. The second was to live upon God that is invisible, as Paul said in another place; the way not to faint, is, 'To look not on the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal.' And thus I reasoned with myself, If I provide only for a prison, then the whip comes at unawares, and so doth also the pillory. Again, if I only provide for these, then I am not fit for banishment: further, If I conclude that banishment is the worst, then if death comes, I am surprised: so that I see the best way to go through sufferings, is to trust in God, through Christ, as touching the world to come; and as touching this world, 'to count the grave my house, to make my bed in darkness; to say to corruption, Thou art my father, and to the worm, Thou art my mother and sister:' that is, to familiarize these things to me.

327. But notwithstanding these helps, I found myself a man encompassed with infirmities; the

parting with my wife and poor children, hath often been to me in this place, as the pulling the flesh from the bones; and also it brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants, that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them, especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer my heart than all beside: Oh! the thoughts of the hardships I thought my poor blind one might go under, would break my heart to pieces.

328. Poor child! thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind should blow upon thee. But yet, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you: Oh! I saw I was as a man who was pulling down his house upon the heads of his wife and children; yet I thought on those 'two milch kine that were to carry the ark of God into another country, and to leave their calves behind them,' 1 Sam. vi. 10.

329. But that which helped me in this temptation was, divers considerations: the first was, the consideration of those two scriptures, 'Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me;' and again, 'The Lord said, verily it shall go well with thy remnant; verily I will cause the enemy to entreat them well in the time of evil,' &c. Jer xlix. 11. xv. 11.

330. I had also this consideration: that if I should venture all for God, I engaged God to take care of my concernments; but if I forsook him in his ways, for fear of any trouble that should come to me or mine, then I should not only falsify my profession, but should count also that my concernments were not so sure, if left at God's feet, as they would be if they were under my own care. This was a smarting consideration, and as spurs into my flaw. That scripture also greatly helped it to

fasten the more on me, where Christ prays against Judas, that God would disappoint him in his selfish thought, which moved him to sell his master. Pray read it soberly, Psal. cix. 6—8, &c.

331. I had also another consideration, and that was, the dread of the torments of hell, which I was sure they must partake of, that, for fear of the cross, do shrink from their profession of Christ: I thought also of the glory he had prepared for those that in faith, and love, and patience, stood to his ways before them. These things, I say, have helped me, when the thoughts of the misery that both myself and mine hath pinched on my mind.

332. When I have indeed conceited that I might be banished for my profession, then I have thought about the sore and sad estate of a banished and exiled condition, how they were exposed to hunger, to cold, to perils, to nakedness, to enemies, and a thousand calamities; and at last, it may be, to die in a ditch, like a poor and disconsolate sheep. But, I thank God, hitherto I have not been moved by these most delicate reasonings, but have rather, by them, more approved my heart to God.

333. I will tell you a pretty business: I was once in a very sad and low condition many weeks; at which time, I being but a young prisoner, and not acquainted with the laws, had this laid much upon my spirit, 'That my imprisonment might end at the gallows for aught that I could tell.' Now therefore Satan laid hard at me, by suggesting thus unto me: 'But how if, when you come indeed to die, you should be in this condition; that is, as not to favour the things of God, nor to have any evidence upon your soul for a better state hereafter?' (For indeed at this time all the things of God were hid from my soul.)

334. Wherefore at first this was a great trouble to me; for I thought with myself, that in this condition I was not fit to die, if I should be called to it. Besides, I thought, if I should make a

scrambling shift to clamber up the ladder, yet I should, either with quaking, or other symptoms of fainting, give occasion to the enemy to reproach the way of God and his people, for their timorousness. This therefore lay with great trouble upon me, for methought I was ashamed to die with a pale face, and tottering knees, in such a case as this.

335. Wherefore I prayed to God that he would give me strength to do and suffer what he should call me to; yet no comfort appeared, but all continued hid; I was also really possessed with the thought of death, that oft I was as if I was on the ladder with a rope about my neck; only this was some encouragement to me, I thought I might now have an opportunity to speak my last words unto a multitude, which I thought would come to see me die; and, thought I, if it must be so, if God will but convert one soul by my last words, I shall not count my life thrown away, nor lost.

336. But yet all the things of God were kept out of my sight, and still the tempter followed me with, 'But whither must you go when you die? What will become of you? Where will you be found in another world? What evidence have you for heaven and glory, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified?' Thus was I tossed for many weeks, and knew not what to do; at last this consideration fell with weight upon me, That it was for the word and way of God that I was in this condition; wherefore I was engaged not to flinch a hair's breadth from it.

337. I thought also, that God might choose whether he would give me comfort now, or at the hour of death; yea, it was my duty to stand to his word, whether he would ever look upon me, or save me at the last; wherefore, thought I, I am for going on, and venturing my eternal state with Christ, whether I have comfort here or no: if God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the ladder even blindfold into eternity, sink or

swim, come heaven, come hell. Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for thy name.

338. I was no sooner fixed with this resolution. but this word dropped upon me, 'Doth Job serve God for naught?' as if the accuser had said, 'Lord, Job is no upright man, he serves thee for by-respects; hast thou not made a hedge about him, &c.' But put forth now thine hand and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face. How now! thought I, is this the sign of an upright soul, to desire to serve God, when all is taken from him? is he a godly man that will serve God for nothing? Blessed be God; then I hope I have an upright heart, for I am resolved (God giving me strength) never to deny my profession, though I had nothing for my pains; and as I was thus considering the scripture was set before me, Psal. xliv. 12, &c.

339. Now was my heart full of comfort, for I would not have been without this trial for much. I am comforted every time I think of it, and I hope I shall bless God for ever for the teaching I have had by it. Many more of the dealings of God toward me I might relate. 'But these out of the spoils, won in battle, have I dedicated to maintain the house of God,' 1 Chron. xxvi. 27.

The Conclusion.

1. Of all the temptations that ever I met with in my life, to question the being of God, and truth of his gospel, is the worst, and the worst to be borne; for it takes away my girdle from me, and removeth the foundation from under me: Oh! I have often thought of that word, 'Have your loins girt about you with truth;' and of that, 'When the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do?'

2. Sometimes when, after sin committed, I have looked for chastisement from the hand of God, the very next that I have had from him, hath

been the discovery of his grace. Sometimes, when I have been comforted, I have called myself a fool for my so sinking under trouble. And then again, when I have been cast down, I thought I was not wise, to give such way to comfort; with such strength and weight have both these come upon me.

3. I have wondered much at this one thing, that though God doth visit my soul with ever so blessed a discovery of himself, yet I have found again, that I have been so filled with darkness, that I could not conceive what that God and that comfort was with which I have been refreshed.

4. I have sometimes seen more in a line of the Bible, than I could well tell how to stand under; and yet at another time, the whole Bible hath been to me as a dry stick; or rather, my heart hath been so dead and dry unto it, that I could not conceive the least refreshment, though I have looked it all over.

5. Of all fears, they are best that are made by the blood of Christ: and of all joy, that is the sweetest that is mixed with mourning over Christ. Oh! 'tis a goodly thing to be on our knees, with Christ in our arms, before God: I hope I know something of these things.

6. I find to this day seven abominations in my heart. 1. Inclining to unbelief. 2. Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth. 3. A leaning to the works of the law. 4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer. 5. To forget to watch for that I pray for. 6. Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have. 7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves. 'When I would do good, evil is present with me.'

7. These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with, yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good. 1. they make me abhor myself. 2. They keep me from trusting my heart. 3. They convince me of the

insufficiency of all inherent righteousness. 4. They show me the necessity of dying to Jesus. 5. They press me to pray unto God. 6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober. 7. And provoke me to pray unto God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world.

A continuation of Mr. Bunyan's Life, beginning where he left off, and concluding with the time and manner of his Death and Burial: together with his true Character, &c.

READER,

THE painful and industrious author of this book has already given you a faithful and very moving relation of the beginning and middle of the days of his pilgrimage on earth; and since there yet remains somewhat worthy of notice and regard, which occurred in the last scene of his life, the which, for want of time, or fear that some over-censorious people should impute it to him as an earnest coveting of praise from men, he has not left behind him in writing. Wherefore, as a true friend, and long acquaintance of Mr. Bunyan's, that his good end may be known, as well as his evil beginning, I have taken upon me, from my knowledge, and the best account given by other of his friends, to piece this to the thread too soon broke off, and so lengthen it out to his entering upon eternity.

He has told you, at large, of his birth and education; the evil habits and corruptions of his youth; the temptations he struggled and conflicted so frequently with; the mercies, comforts, and deliverances he found; how he came to take upon him the preaching of the gospel; the slanders, reproaches, and imprisonments that attended him, and the progress he notwithstanding made (by the assistance of God's grace,) no doubt to the saving of many souls: therefore take these things, as he himself hath methodically laid them down, in the words of verity; and so I pass on to what remains.

After his being freed from his twelve years' imprisonment and upward, for nonconformity, wherein he had time to furnish the world with sundry good books, &c. and, by his patience, to move Dr. Barlow, the then bishop of Lincoln, and other churchmen, to pity his hard and unreasonable sufferings, so far as to stand very much in his friends, procuring his enlargement, or there perhaps he had died, by the noisomeness and ill usage of the place. Being now, I say, again at liberty, and having, through mercy, shaken off his bodily fetters, for those upon his soul were broken before by the abounding grace that filled his heart, he went to visit those that had been a comfort to him in his tribulation, with a Christian-like acknowledgement of their kindness and enlargement of charity; giving encouragement by his example, if it happened to be their hard hap to fall into affliction or trouble, then to suffer patiently for the sake of a good conscience, and for the love of God in Jesus Christ toward their souls; and by many cordial persuasions, supported some whose spirits began to sink low, through the fear of danger that threaented their worldly concernment, so that the people found a wonderful consolation in his discourse and admonition.

As often as opportunity would admit, he gathered them together, (though the law was then in force against meetings,) in convenient places, and fed them with the sincere milk of the word, that they might grow up in grace thereby. To such as were any where taken and imprisoned upon these accounts, he made it another part of his business to extend his charity, and gather relief for such of them as wanted.

He took great care to visit the sick, and strengthen them against the suggestions of the tempter, which at some times are very prevalent; so that they had cause for ever to bless God, who hath put it into his heart, at such a time, to rescue them from the power of the roaring lion, who sought to devour them; nor did he spare any

pains or labour in travel, though to the remotest countries, where he knew or imagined any people might stand in need of his assistance; inso-much that some, by these visitations that he had made, which were two or three every year, some, though in jeering manner no doubt, gave him the epithet of Bishop Bunyan, whilst others envied him for his so earnestly labouring in Christ's vineyard; for the seed of the word he all this while sowed in the hearts of his congregation, watered with the grace of God, brought forth in abundance, in bringing in disciples to the church of Christ.

Another part of his time he spent in reconciling differences, by which he hindered many mischiefs, and saved some families from ruin, and in such fallings-out he was uneasy till he found a means to labour a reconciliation, and become a peace-maker, on whom a blessing is promised in holy writ; and indeed doing this good office he may be said to sum up his days, it being the last undertaking of his life, as will appear in the close of this paper.

When in the late King James' reign, liberty of conscience was unexpectedly given to Dissenters of all persuasions, he gathered his congregation at Bedford, where he mostly lived, and had spent the greatest part of his life; and there being no convenient place for the entertainment of so great a confluence of people as followed him, he consulted with them for building a meeting house, to which they made their voluntary contributions with all cheerfulness and alacrity; and the first time he appeared there to edify, the place was so thronged, that many were constrained to keep without, though the house was very spacious; every one striving to partake of his instructions, that were of his persuasion, and show their goodwill toward him, by being present at the opening of the place. Here he lived in much peace and quiet of mind, contenting himself with that little God had bestowed upon him, and se-

questering himself from all employments, to follow that of his ministry; for, as God said to Moses, 'He that made the lips and heart can give eloquence and wisdom,' without extraordinary acquisitions in a university.

When he was at leisure from writing and teaching, he came up to London, and went among the congregations of the nonconformists, to the great good-liking of the hearers; and even some to whom he had been misrepresented, on account of his education were convinced of his knowledge in sacred things, perceiving him to be a man of sound judgment, delivering himself plainly and powerfully; insomuch that many who came spectators for novelty, rather than to be edified and improved, went away well satisfied with what they heard, and wondered, as the Jews did at the apostle, 'whence this man should have these things.'

In imitation of his great Lord and Master, the ever-blessed Jesus, he went about doing good, so that even malice herself is defied to find any stain upon his reputation, with which he may be justly charged.

After he was sensibly convicted of the wicked state of his life, and converted, he was baptized into the congregation, and admitted a member thereof, viz. in the year 1655, and became speedily a very zealous professor; but upon the return of King Charles to the crown, in 1660, he was, the 12th of November, taken, as he was edifying some good people that were got together to hear the word, and confined in Bedford gaol for six years, till the Act of Indulgence to Dissenters being allowed, he obtained his freedom, by the intercession of some in trust and power, that took pity on his sufferings: but within six years afterward he was again taken up, (viz. in the year 1666,) and was then confined for six years more; when the gaoler took such pity of his rigorous sufferings, that he did as the Egyptian gaoler did to Joseph, put all the care and trust in his hand. When he

was taken this last time, he was preaching on these words, viz. 'Dost thou believe on the Son of God?' And this imprisonment continued six years; and when this was over, another imprisonment, of half a year, fell to his share. During these confinements, he wrote these following books, viz. 'Of prayer by the Spirit;' 'The Holy City's Resurrection;' 'Grace Abounding;' 'Pilgrim's Progress,' the first part.

In the last year of his twelve years' imprisonment, the pastor of the congregation at Bedford died, and he was chosen to that cure of souls, on the 12th of December, 1671. And in his charge, he often had disputes with scholars that came to oppose him, as supposing him an ignorant person: and though he argued plainly, without phrases and logical expressions, yet he nonplused one who came to oppose him in his congregation, by demanding, whether or no we had the true copies of the original Scriptures: and another, when he was preaching, accused him of uncharitableness, for saying, it was very hard for most to be saved: saying, by that he went about to exclude most of his congregation; but he confuted him, and put him to silence with the parable of the stony ground, and other texts out of the 13th chapter of St. Matthew, in our Saviour's sermon out of a ship: all his methods being to keep close to the Scriptures, and what he found not warranted there, himself would not warrant nor determine.

But not to make any further mention of this kind, it is well known that he managed all his affairs with such exactness, as if he had made it his study, above all other things, not to give occasion of offence. He was never heard to reproach or revile any, what injury soever he received, but rather to rebuke those that did; and as it was in his conversation, so it is manifested in those books he has caused to be published to the world.

In his family he kept up a strict discipline in prayer and exhortation; being in this like Joshua, viz. 'Whatsoever others do, as for me and my

house, we will serve the Lord:' and indeed a blessing waited on his labours and endeavours, so that his wife, 'was like a pleasant vine upon the walls of his house, and his children like olive branches round his table:' and though by reason of the many losses he sustained by imprisonment and spoil, of his chargeable sickness, &c. his earthly treasure swelled not to excess; he always had sufficient to live decently and creditably, and with that he had the greatest of all treasures, which is content; for where content dwells, even a poor cottage is a kindly palace; and this happiness he had all his life long; not so much minding this world, as knowing he was here as a pilgrim and stranger, and had no tarrying city, but looked for one not made with hands. At length, being worn out with sufferings, age, and often teaching, the day of his dissolution drew near; and death, that unlocks the prison of the soul, to enlarge it for a more glorious mansion, put a stop to his acting his part on the stage of mortality: heaven, like earthly princes, when it threatens war, being always so kind as to call home its ambassadors before it be denounced. Even the last undertaking of his was a labour of love and charity; for a young gentleman, a neighbour of Mr. Bunyan's, happening to fall into the displeasure of his father, and being much troubled in mind on that account, as also for that he heard his father purposed to disinherit him, he pitched upon Mr. Bunyan as a fit man to make way for his submission, and prepare his father's mind to receive him; and he, willing to do any good office, readily undertook it. So riding to Reading, in Berkshire, he used such pressing arguments and reasons against anger and passion, as also for love and reconciliation, that the father was reconciled to his son.

But Mr. Bunyan, returning to London, being overtaken with excessive rains, and coming to his lodgings extremely wet, fell sick of a violent fever: which he bore with much constancy and

patience, and expressed himself as if he desired nothing more than to be dissolved, and he with Christ, in that case esteeming death as gain, and life only as a tedious delaying of felicity expected; and finding his vital strength decay, having settled his mind and affairs, as well as the shortness of time, and the violence of his disease would permit, with a constant and Christian patience, he resigned his soul into the hands of his most merciful Redeemer, following his Pilgrim from the city of Destruction to the New Jerusalem; his better part having been all along there, in holy contemplation, pantings, and breathings after the hidden manna and water of life. He died at the house of one Mr. Struddock, a grocer, at the Star on Snow-hill, in the parish of St. Sepulchre's. London, on the 12th of August, 1688, and in the sixtieth year of his age, after ten days' sickness; and was buried in the New Burying-Place, near the Artillery Ground; where he sleeps till the morning of the resurrection, in hopes of a glorious rising to an incorruptible immortality of joy and happiness; where no more trouble and sorrow shall afflict him, but all tears be wiped away; when the just shall be incorporated as members of Christ their head, and reign with him as kings and priests for ever.

A Brief Character of Mr. John Bunyan.

HE appeared in countenance to be of a stern and rough temper, but in his conversation mild and affable; not given to loquacity or much discourse to company, unless some urgent occasion required it; observing never to boast of himself or his parts, but rather seem low in his own eyes, and submit himself to the judgment of others, abhorring lying and swearing, being just in all that lay in his power to his word, not seeming to revenge injuries, loving to reconcile differences, and make friendship with all: he had a sharp quick eye, accompanied with an excellent discerning of per-

sons, being of good judgment and quick wit. As for his person, he was tall of stature, strong-boned, though not corpulent, somewhat of a ruddy face, with sparkling eyes, wearing his hair on his upper lip, after the old British fashion; his hair reddish, but in his latter days, time had sprinkled it with gray; his nose well set, but not declining or bending, and his mouth moderately large; his forehead somewhat high, and his habit always plain and modest. And thus we have impartially described the internal and external parts of a person whose death hath been much regretted; a person who hath tried the smiles and frowns of time; not puffed up in prosperity, nor shaken in adversity; always holding the golden mean.

In him at once did three great Worthies shine,
Historian, Poet, and a choice Divine :
Then let him rest in undisturbed dust,
Until the resurrection of the just.

Postscript.

IN this his pilgrimage, God blessed him with four children; one of which, named Mary, was blind, and died some years before; his other children were Thomas, Joseph, and Sarah; his wife, Elizabeth, having lived to see him overcome his labour and sorrow, and pass from this life to receive the reward of his work, long survived him not; for in 1692 she died, to follow her faithful pilgrim from this world to the other, whither he was gone before her: whilst his works, which consist of sixty books, remain for the edifying of the reader, and praise of the author.

END OF GRACE ABOUNDING.

HEART'S EASE

IN

HEART TROUBLE.

‘ Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also in me.’ John, xiv. 1—3. ver. 1.

THESE words are a part of our blessed Saviour’s last sermon upon earth just before his passion, which begins (as is probable) at the 13th verse of the 13th chapter of this gospel, and ends at the last verse of the 16th chapter ; in which verse our Lord tells his disciples (how dear soever they were to him, yet) in the world they should have persecution, tribulation ; of which he had often told them before in effect : that they should not expect their heaven here, but his cross they must bear, if they would wear his crown : tribulations of all kinds, outward and inward, you must endure ; it is your portion here, you are thereunto appointed. Man is naturally born to trouble, as the sparks naturally fly upward, and new-born to trouble also, and commonly to new and more troubles, Acts, xiv. 22. 2 Tim. iii. 18. ‘ All that will live godly in Christ Jesus, shall suffer persecution ;’ of hand or tongue, one way or other. Indeed, such as can be content with a profession of a godliness that may suit with the times ; that can please themselves with any kind of godliness, or with a form, any form of godliness, and that can change their forms when they please, such may avoid persecution ; but all that will live godly in Christ Jesus, in the power and spirit of Christ Jesus, and resolve to live up to the ex-

ample and rule of Christ Jesus, they shall have persecution, no avoiding of it. No entering into the kingdom of God but by tribulation. But notwithstanding this, our Lord lays this positive command on his disciples: 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

These poor disciples were like shortly to sustain a heavy loss of their dearest Lord; he was now a going away from them, a greater loss they could not have; and yet, saith Christ, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.' Which command is repeated and explained in the 27th verse, 'Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.'

What! might they say, must we not be troubled at all? must nothing trouble us? No, we must not be troubled for any outward loss, for any outward tribulation, for parting with the nearest and dearest relation, we must not be troubled. Yet we are not forbidden to be troubled for Zion. It is a grievous sin, not to be grieved for the afflictions of Joseph; surely, we must be troubled for God's dishonour, because men break God's commandments. Trouble of heart, except for sin, is sinful trouble. Where sin lies heavy, affliction lies light. Isa. xxxiii. 24. 'They shall not say, I am sick; for their iniquities shall be forgiven them.' Sense of pardon to those souls that have felt the burden of sin, much alleviates and lightens the burden of affliction, 'Strike, Lord,' said Luther, 'now I am absolved from my sin.'

We are always too prone to fall into extremes, to sin either in excess or in defect; too much, or too little; we are faulty both ways. As for sin, which is the worst of evils, we are apt to be troubled too little. How few fail here in the excess, though it is possible so to do; and some have, that refuse to be comforted by all the sweet promises of Christ in the gospel; but there are but few of those; most of us fail in the defect. We are not troubled for sin so much as we should; our sins do not lie so hard and heavy upon us as

they should: our hearts do seldom feel the weight of sin pressing us down: many sins lie lightly on us: our vain thoughts, our omissions, careless performance of holy duties, misspending precious time, idle talk, &c. and such like evils, which should trouble us most, they trouble us least.

But our afflictions, which, comparatively, are but light, lie too heavy upon us, and press us down even to the dust. So, in respect of afflictions themselves, we are apt to run into extremes, against which the Holy Ghost gives caution as to both extremes: Prov. iii. 11, 12, 'My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his chastisements;' the apostle explains it, 'neither faint when thou art corrected of him,' Heb. xii. 5, 6, adding a most powerful argument against those extremes, ver. 6 'For whom the Lord loveth, he correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth;' and therefore despise not his chastisements and fatherly corrections; slight them not, for they come from a loving father, a wise father, and should not be despised by his children; they are the fruits of his love. Also, you must not be weary of them, nor faint under them, for the same reason, viz. because they shall not hurt you, they flow from your father's love, from a father they come, who delighteth in you, and therefore ye ought not to faint under them; or, as it is in the text, whatever affliction befalls you, 'Let not your heart be troubled.'

It is *heart-trouble*, you see, that is here forbidden: not a filial sense of God's *hand*, nor a childlike acknowledgment of God's *rod*: God's rod hath a voice, and its voice must be heard. When his hand is lifted up to strike, to lay on any blows on us, or on any of our relations, or earthly comforts, we must observe *it*, and *him*, and acknowledge the same; but, not to acknowledge, and observe the hand of God; not to consider in the day of adversity, not to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, not to stoop and yield to God, but

to think, or say, of our affliction, that it cannot be helped, there is no remedy, it is common and ordinary, and the like; this is to despise the chastening of the Lord, take heed of this. But yet, we must take heed too, that under the pretence of being sensible of the hand of God, and of his strokes upon us, that we do not fall into the other extreme, of being weary of his chastisements, and of despondency, and fainting under his corrections, we must be careful that we do 'not let our hearts be troubled.'

Quest. But is it possible that we should be afflicted, deprived of liberty, of estate, of loving relations, of the desire of our eyes, and of the delight of our hearts (for such in a most eminent manner was Jesus Christ to his disciples, 'He was the desire of all nations,' and not be troubled at our very hearts? Can we behold our Benjamins, our Sarahs, our Rebekahs, our Josephs, &c., taken away, our dear husbands, or loving, faithful, tender wives snatched away from us with a stroke, with a sudden stroke, to be in a moment deprived of such comforts, and in such a time too, in an evil time, in a sad and suffering time, when such helpers would sweeten our sufferings, and help bear our burdens, would give us sweet counsel, and uphold us in the way of God? What, is it possible such knots should be untied, and so suddenly, such flowers cropt off, cut down; such sweet friends removed from us, as lay once in our bosoms, and sent to the chambers of darkness, sealed up in the dust, made silent in the grave, to see their sweet faces no more, till the heavens be no more? Is it possible, I say, in such cases not to be troubled? or if it be possible, is it necessary, or is it attainable? May we arrive to such a temper, may we get such a calm, quiet, tranquil, and submissive frame of spirit? It is admirable, but is it attainable?

I answer, We must not despise the chastenings of the Lord, as was noted before, we must not be as stocks or stones, altogether insensible of the

hand of God upon us: no, we must be sensible, we must lay those things to our hearts, and consider the work of God: such losses, and of such, are to be lamented; they will be found wanting, their relations will find them wanting, their families will find them wanting, the poor will find them wanting, and the church also. David lamented the loss of Jonathan; and the disciples the loss of Lazarus. Lawful it is, then, to be affected with the deaths and departures of our dear relations and friends, and moderately to mourn for them; but our care must be, that we suffer not nature to work alone without grace, for then it will soon go beyond its bounds; nature must be restrained and bounded. It is moderate mourning that is lawful. Mourn we may, 'but not as those that have no hope,' 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14. For, those that sleep in Jesus, they being safe and happy; for, 'if we believe that Jesus died, and rose again; even so they that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him.' Troubled we cannot choose but be in such cases, and under such strokes, but we must 'not let our hearts be troubled,' saith our Lord. And what this imports, you shall see by and by. It is trouble of heart that is here forbidden; but what is it, that will prevent or cure this *heart trouble*? Our Saviour answers in the next words; 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me: in my Father's house are many mansions,' &c. In which, we may observe these parts, viz.

1. An evil disease, or spiritual distemper; intimated and prohibited, to which the disciples of Christ are incident and prone in time of affliction; and that is, *trouble of heart*. This may seize you, but take heed of it, labour against it. As if the Lord had said, I know it will be a cutting, a killing thing to you to part with me, your dear and loving Lord and master; but part with me you must, and take heed of this indecent distemper of *heart trouble*: 'Let not your hearts be troubled,' saith our Lord Jesus.

2 The best preventive of, or remedy for, this spiritual distemper proposed and enjoined: 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.' As if our Lord had said, surely you believe in God, why then are your hearts troubled? Cannot your faith in God support you, if you act upon him; but if that cannot, then act your faith also on me; 'Believe also in me.' Set your faith on work on me. Believe that I love you, that when I leave you, I will not leave you comfortless; 'I will send the Comforter unto you, and he shall abide with you for ever,' John, xiv. 16, 17. Therefore let not your hearts be troubled. 'Believe in me;' I must leave you, and I and you must part; but, believe where I am going, and let the consideration of that quiet you, and comfort you; 'in my Father's house are many mansions:' There is a better, a far better, condition for you above, than that you are in here; for, here you are tossed up and down from place to place, and are exposed to many straits. I myself here on earth, have not a house wherein to lay my head; but in my Father's house are many mansions. There is a house above, 'not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' 2 Cor. v. 1. When once you come thither, you shall remove no more; there are *many* mansions, room enough for you all, and for all the innumerable company of angels and saints; therefore, 'believe in me;' for, these things are most true that I tell you. And believe also, 'that I go to prepare a place for you:' I go to take possession of those celestial mansions, of those everlasting habitations for you, in your name and stead. While you are here on earth, I shall prepare you for those mansions; and when I go from you, I will prepare them for you. Therefore, to prevent those heart troubles which you are subject to, because of my departure from you, and to fortify you against them, (for I am solicitous for you,) this is the remedy that I propose you, and enjoin you to practise; that seeing 'you believe in God, believe also in me;' act your faith

on me. From which words thus explained, I commend to your Christian consideration this gospel doctrine, viz.

Doct. 'That the lively acting of true faith upon God and Christ, or upon God in Christ, is the best preventive of, and remedy against heart trouble, under the greatest loss whatever.' Or, 'Faith acted on God in Christ, is the sovereign cure of heart trouble.'

Our Lord Jesus is very tender over his poor disciples, and having foretold them of the hard usage, and bad entertainment they should meet with in the world, losses and crosses, tribulations and persecutions; he now leaves with them some antidotes against distempers of mind: some cordials against those faintings of spirit, and troubles of heart, to which he knew they, being flesh and blood, were subject. And this in the text, is chief and principal: 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.' This your faith will be your best cure, your best remedy.

Poor believers are but princes in disguise here in this world: princes they are, Christ hath made them all so; but while here below they are in a foreign land, under a veil. 'It doth not now appear what they shall be,' 1 John, iii. 2. They have a large patrimony, but it lies indeed in a land unknown to the world, it is in *Terra Incognita*, if the expression can be borne. The holy, the great God himself, is their portion, their heritage. God is their sure, their full, their lasting, their everlasting portion. They are 'heirs of a kingdom,' James, ii. 5. 'Heirs of salvation,' Heb. 'ast. 'Heirs of God, coheirs with Christ,' Rom. viii. 17. 'Yea, all things of this world are theirs,' 1 Cor. iii. 21. All things are blessed and sanctified to them, and shall conduce to their spiritual and eternal welfare, Rom. viii. 28. Yet notwithstanding all this, and although heaven and earth lies at the feet (as it were) of godliness, and of those that profess it, in the power of it: 'God-

liness having the promise of this life, and of that which is to come,' 1 Tim. iv. 8; and, notwithstanding believers have a true title to all the good of both worlds, yet, may those poor but blessed saints be exposed to manifold temptations and tribulations in this world; they may have a dark, and sad, and stormy way of it to their father's house; they may be stript of all their earthly comforts, may be deprived of their liberty, estate, nearest friends and relations, as we read in Scripture, that such hath been the portion of the best saints; and upon this the people of God have been dejected and disquieted; they have desponded, their hearts have been troubled, and have thereby displeased their heavenly Father, who would have them believe, that all things shall work together for their good.

Now, our Lord, in this text, forbids this distemper of mind, and would not have his disciples, who had God for their Father, and himself for their Redeemer, and who had title to such happiness in the other world, to despond, and to be disquieted; therefore he lays this charge on them, 'Let not your hearts be troubled;' adding the proper means to prevent this sinful malady of heart trouble, that it might not seize on them; or if it had, to cure them of it, viz. 'Ye believe in God, believe also in me.'

'The lively acting of true faith upon God in Christ! it is the best preventive of, and remedy against, heart trouble,' under the greatest loss whatsoever. Which proposition I shall prosecute, in the assistance of God's Spirit, and according to the measures of light and grace I have received, after this manner and method following:

First, by way of demonstration; Secondly, of confirmation; and then to apply and make improvement of it for use.

1. By way of demonstration. Endeavouring to show,

First, that God's choicest saints are, in this world, subject to all kinds of troubles, losses, and afflictions; and whence it is, and why so.

Secondly, That under those losses and afflictions, they are subject to despond, to be dejected, and to be troubled in their hearts.

Thirdly, what this *heart trouble* is, that Christ forbids here.

Fourthly, how, that believing in God and Christ is the best means to prevent, and cure this *heart trouble*.

First, that God's choicest saints are liable to all kinds of troubles, losses, and afflictions; even the greatest, heaviest, and sorest; as we read of Job, David, Heman, and others.

God had but one *Son* without sin, but no *son* without suffering. His only begotten Son was a man of sorrows: and the Holy Ghost assures us, that 'if ye be without chastening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.' Heb. viii. 12.

God's children are liable to sufferings, whether we consider them as *men*, or as *Christians*; as *men*, Job. xiv. 1, Man that is born of a woman, is full of trouble. 'As our relations and comforts increase, so do the occasions of trouble. God never appointed this world to be the place of man's *rest*, but of our exercise, and only a *passage*, to another world: and in this our passage we must look for storms and tempests: If we can through mercy obtain a tolerable passage through this world, and a comfortable passage out of it into that *better* above, we shall have cause to bless the Lord to all eternity.

And much more, as Christians, must we expect troubles: for a man is no sooner brought home to God, but he must expect to be hated by the world, assaulted by Satan, chastened by the Lord; our own corrupt hearts will be always vexing; the old man, the flesh, thwarting all the motions of the new nature, 'lusting against the spirit.' The lusts of the flesh will be as pricks in our eyes, and as thorns in our sides; we shall have enemies in our own houses.

But this truth is so manifest in all the Scripture.

that I shall insist no longer on it, only shall add this by way of use; let all Christians prepare for affliction, by getting an interest in God through Christ, by getting sin pardoned and purged, by getting peace with God and conscience, by getting hearts crucified to the world; and then, when troubles come, let us bear them as Christians, not murmur, nor repine, but in patience possess our souls; not desponding nor fainting; remembering that our troubles are no more, but infinitely less than we have deserved, Job, xxxiv. 23, 'He will not lay upon man more than right.' God perfectly understands our *need*, and knows our *strength*, 1 Pet. i. 6, 'If need be, ye are in heaviness.' 'He is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able,' 1 Cor. x. 13. It is the wise, just, and gracious God, and our Father, that tempers our cup for us. Many earthly parents do not correct their children in *measure*, being ignorant of their nature and disposition; and therefore their correction doth them no good. Many physicians mistake the constitution of their patients, and therefore may do them more hurt than good; but God knows our need and our strength, and so suits all his remedies accordingly; therefore let us be patient, bearing our troubles with an equal mind, not suffering as *per force*, but willingly. It is said, Dan. iii. 28, 'That day yielded their bodies,' that is, cheerfully, 'to the fire.' In our affliction let us search our hearts, and try our ways; let us fly to God by prayer, and resign up ourselves to him, and trust in him, casting our cares and burdens on him, Ps. lv. 22. 1 Pet. v. 7.

Moreover, it is our wisdom, that while we are at ease, have our comforts about us, let us look for troubles; afflictions *from* God, as well as *for* God, are part of our cross which we must take up daily. Sickness, death of friends, loss of estate, &c., we must look for them that we may not be surprised.

He that buildeth a house, or a ship, doth not make this his work and care, that it should not

rain upon it: or that it should have no storms or tempests, for this cannot be prevented by any care of ours, but that the house or ship may be made able to endure all without prejudice. So must it be our care to provide for afflictions; for to prevent them altogether we cannot; but prepare for them we may, and must, as was hinted before; to treasure up God's promises, and store our souls with graces, and spiritual comforts, and firm resolutions in God's strength, to bear up and hold on; we had need be well 'shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,' Eph. vi. 15.

Most Christians are not mortified and crucified to the world, not acquainted with God and the promises, as they ought to be, nor so resolved to follow God fully, as they ought, and therefore are so dejected and discontented when affliction comes. O that we did count the cost, when we first begin to make profession of Christ: and that we had such full persuasions of the incomparable worth and excellences of the Lord Jesus, as that we could willingly part with all things for his sake! O that we had such believing apprehension of the wisdom, faithfulness, righteousness, and mercy of God, such sights of his reconciled face, and such tastes of his fatherly love to us in Christ, as that we could quietly submit to his holy will, and be well satisfied with all his dispensations toward us. So much of this first particular

Secondly, the disciples of Christ, under the afflictions which they meet with in this world, are apt to be troubled in their hearts, to be disquieted in their minds, to be dejected and discouraged. It was so with holy David, Psalm, xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? why art thou disquieted within me?' He was sensible of his afflictions, and that disquieted him, and cast him down. God's people are subject to such disquietments, because they are flesh and blood, subject to the same passions, made of the same mould, subject to the same impressions from without as other men, and their natures are upheld with the

same supports and refreshments as others, the withdrawing and want of which affecteth them as well as others. And besides those troubles they suffer in common with others, by reason of their being called out of the world, the world hates them, and they are therefore more exposed to tribulation than others, and so are apt to be cast down and discouraged: this our Lord fore saw would befall his disciples after his departure from them; and therefore he counsels them against the same; 'Let not your hearts be troubled'

Quest. But it may be demanded, 'Whence ariseth this heart trouble, and disquietment of mind under affliction?'

Ans. There are many causes of it, which is necessary for us to know, that so, knowing the causes, we may the better find the cure. There are outward and inward causes.

First, Outward causes. And the first may be God himself. He sometimes withdraws the beams of his countenance, withholds the sense of his love, hideth his face from his children; (which the saints in Scripture so bitterly complain of, and so earnestly pray against.) Whereupon the souls, even of the strongest Christians, are disquieted. This caused trouble to the soul of Jesus Christ himself, John, xii. 37. When a poor child of God, together with his affliction, apprehends God to be his enemy, and that his troubles are mixed with God's displeasure; and it may be his conscience tells him that God hath a just quarrel against him, because he hath not walked so holily, so humbly, so evenly, and so strictly with God, as he might, had he been more watchful, careful, and circumspect: and that he hath not renewed and kept his peace with God as he should, and might have done: and this sense of God's displeasure puts a sting into all his afflictions, and this causeth trouble of heart and disquietment of mind. And justly may such a soul be troubled that has ever felt the 'joys of God's salvation, the sweet influences of his love, that has tasted that the Lord is gracious, seeing, that in his

favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life,' Psalm xxx. 5. lxiii. 3.

Secondly, The devil is the cause, sometimes, of the heart trouble of God's children. For he being a cursed spirit cast out of heaven, full of disquietment and discontent himself, labours all he can to trouble and disquiet others to bring others, (as much as in him lies) into the same cursed condition with himself: he being cast out of paradise himself, envies us the paradise of a good and quiet conscience, for that is our paradise until we come to heaven; and this paradise a poor child of God may possess in a prison, in a dungeon, on a dunghill.

Two main designs the devil hath upon men; the one is, if possibly, by all imaginable sleights, temptations, and enticements, he may keep men in a course of ungodliness, to hinder them from coming to Christ by faith and repentance, to deter them from his holy ways. And when he cannot prosper in this, but that unsearchable, rich, and free grace takes hold of some poor souls, and they are snatched out of his hands, their captivity led captive by that 'mighty Redeemer,' then all the devil's labour is to hinder their comfort, and to interrupt their peace, and to make their way to heaven as hard and uncomfortable to them as possible, pursuing them with all dejecting and heart troubling temptations.

Thirdly, Wicked men are also active in the troubling of God's people; they are indeed the true troublers of God's Israel. They load God's people with reproaches, and there is nothing that the nature of man is more impatient of than reproaches, for there is no man so mean but thinks himself worthy of some respect; now a reproachful scorn shows an utter disrespect of a man, which flows from the very superfluity of malice. 'Reproach hath broken my heart,' saith David, Psalm lxix. 20. and nothing more doth he complain of than reproach, and nothing more are God's people

liable to than this. These are the causes from without.

Lastly, There are inward causes also of heart trouble and despondency: when God's people are in affliction, most time that black cloud of melancholy also surrounds them, and darkness makes men fearful and dejected.

There are many causes within ourselves, as ignorance of God, and of Christ, of the covenant of grace, of the name of God. They that know God's name, will trust in him, and not be dejected. Also, forgetfulness of God, and of what he hath done for us. We forget God, when we are afraid of man. Our overlooking and passing by the many comforts we enjoy, even while we are under affliction, taking little notice of our mercies, but let them be all swallowed up in our miseries; as Abraham, because he had no heir; and Rachel, who said, 'Give me children, or I die;' though she had all other earthly comforts, yet the want of this one so troubled her, that all the rest seemed nothing.

It is an evil thing for us to be wedded to our own wills. None more subject to discontent than those who would have all things after their own way, and are mere strangers to self-denial. Likewise, false apprehensions of things cause heart trouble; to think God hates us because he corrects us, and when he takes from us, that it is all in wrath. Another common cause is our own watchlessness and carelessness, our neglect of keeping our hearts and consciences pure and clean: and in time of affliction, these former neglects of duty come to our minds, then conscience awakes, and tells our former faults, and this brings trouble of heart. 1 Kings, xvii. 18.

Moreover, unnecessary scruples cause disquietness, solitariness, idleness, when persons will not do what is needful, they are troubled with that which is needless; and idleness tempts the devil to tempt us and trouble us: if we cannot find

work for ourselves, the devil will make work for us.

Also, when we are guilty of neglecting doing good to others, as to our relations, not reproving, admonishing, or encouraging them as we ought, or have neglected to receive that good from them that we might, but now they are dead and gone, and we can no more do any good to them, nor receive any from them; this hath troubled many on their sick and death-beds.

Inconstancy, wavering in the ways of God, will also breed disquiet. And our inordinate love of creature comforts, our setting of our hearts on friends, estates, and the like, letting out our hearts on husbands, wives, children, &c., this is to build castles in the air, expecting contentment in and from those things that cannot yield it. Also multitude of worldly business, and too much poring on our afflictions, and forecasting the events of things. You see what a crowd of causes here be within ourselves of disquiet and heart trouble.

The third particular proposed is, what is this heart trouble which Christ here forbids his people, and that he would fortify them against?

A. This heart trouble is such a sense of evils felt or feared, as creates to us heart disquietment, dejection, despondency, depriving us of that tranquillity, peace, and comfort which we had in ourselves, or otherwise might have; it is such a disturbance of our passions, such a storm and tempest in our spirits, as causeth inward motions, emotions, and commotions of mind, putting all things in the soul out of order: and it carries in it several evil things, as follow:

First, Sinful sorrow, worldly sorrow. When Christ had told his disciples that he would leave them, and that after he was gone, they should be exposed to hard and heavy things from the world, bitter persecution for his name sake; then sorrow filled their hearts, John, xvi. 1—6.

God's own servants, Christ's own disciples, may have their hearts filled with sorrow: against this

our Lord commands many preservatives in this sermon. The ground of this sorrow is from ourselves, from our own hearts, though Satan will have a hand in it: and it comes not from humility, but from pride; because we cannot have our wills, therefore we are discontented. We may thank ourselves, not only for our troubles, but for our over much troubling ourselves in our troubles. If we ward and guard against this worldly sorrow, our troubles would not lie so heavy on us as they do; for, as the joy of the Lord doth raise and strengthen the soul, so doth sorrow deject and weaken it. Sorrow and grief doth lie like lead to the heart, cold and heavy, and sinks it downward still; sorrow contracteth and draweth the soul into itself, from that communion and comfort it might have with God and man; and it weakeneth the execution of the offices of it, because it drinketh up the spirits, it melteth the soul, it causeth it to drop away. Yea, in this kind of heart trouble, God's own people are many times more excessive than others.

1. Because many times their burdens are greater, their temptations, desertions, troubles for sin greater; as their joys are unspeakable and glorious, so their sorrows are sometimes above expression. Common and natural courage will carry a man through other single afflictions, but sin is a heavier burden than affliction, and the wrath of God than the wrath of man.

2. They have a greater sense than others, their hearts being made tender by religion; they have also a clearer judgment than others, and see more into the nature of things than others; they see a greater evil in sin, and in the displeasure of God, than others; they value God's favour more than others, therefore when he hides his face, they cannot but be troubled. They observe more of the displeasure of God in afflictive providences than others do, and therefore they have more sorrow.

3. They have more tender affections than others; the new heart is a soft heart. A stamp is

ooner set upon the wax than upon a stone. A wicked man hath more cause to be troubled than a godly man; but he is not a man of that tenderness and sense, and therefore is not so affected, either with God's dealings with him, or with his dealings with God.

Thus we find often in Scripture good souls depressed with sorrow. David said, he was like a skin-bottle in the smoke, all wrinkled and dried up. Read Psalm xxxviii. and xxxix. 11. 'When thou with rebukes doth correct man for sin,' that is, by sicknesses, death of relations, and other losses, 'thou makest his beauty,' that is of his outward man, 'to consume away like a moth.' Whereas the beauty of the soul grows fair by affliction, but that of the body is blasted. Age, sickness, losses, will make the beauty of the body to fade, but of the soul to shine. 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though our outward man doth decay and perish, our inward man is renewed day by day.' But for worldly sorrow; that too often not only weakeneth the body, but also causeth heart trouble. 'A merry heart doth good like a medicine, but a broken spirit drieth the bones,' Prov. xvii. 22.

Quest. But is this worldly sorrow lawful and commendable?

Answer. No surely, for there are many evils in it, which we should avoid. As,

1. Impatience and murmuring against God, that is an effect of immoderate sorrow: when our wills are crossed, we cannot bear it, for want of self-denial.

2. Quarrelling at instruments.

3. Using indirect means for our relief. It is better to pine away in our afflictions, than to be freed from them by sinning.

4. Desponding and distrustful thoughts of God. Is his mercy clean gone? will he be favourable no more? Psalm lxxvii. 7, 8.

5. Questioning our interest in God, merely because of the affliction upon us. Judg. vi. 13, 'I, God be with us, why is all this befallen us?' Not considering how hard soever God dealeth with his people, yet he loveth them, Heb. xii. 6.

present sufferings: 'Give me children, or else I die.'

9. It makes us unfit to receive mercies, and to embrace the best counsels; such plasters will not stick, they refuse to be comforted. Psalm lxxvii. 2.

10. It disposeth us to receive any temptation: Satan hath never more advantage than upon discontent.

11. It hinders beginners from coming unto the ways of God.

12. It rejoiceth and hardeneth the wicked, and it grieves and damps the spirits of our friends. All these, and many more evils, are in worldly sorrow.

Therefore, this evil temper we must labour against, and not suffer ourselves to be dejected in sickness, contempt in the world, loss of friends and relations, loss of honour, and earthly interest. May we only think to be exempted from chastisements, whereof all God's children are partakers? Heb. xii. 8. And must God make a new way to Heaven for us? Or, do we think it best for us to live here for ever, in ease, and plenty, and honour, and never see a change? No, surely it is in vain to think so: it becometh us betimes, to prepare for crosses. None so strong, lively, and brisk now, but they shall shortly wither and decay. None hold their heads so high now, but they must shortly lay them down in the dust. We and our dearest relations must part.

It would be our wisdom, to turn the stream of our sorrow for losses and crosses, into godly sor-

row for sin, then it will run in its right channel. Let our sins lie heavy upon us, and then our afflictions will lie light: let us grow weary of our sins, not of our sufferings. 'God doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men,' Lam. iii. 33. Let us consider, also, the real spiritual benefit of affliction: God aims at our profit; and in good time, in the best time he will send deliverance. And be sure those that are not unmindful of their duty, God will not be unmindful of their safety.

But that which should mostly affect us, and make us take heed of immoderate worldly sorrow, is to consider, that this kind of sorrow of heart is God's curse, imprecated on God's enemies; Lam. iii. 65. 'Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse.' As godly sorrow is God's blessing, a grace of God's Spirit, a fruit of the covenant of grace, and a fruit of faith, Zech. xii. 10, so worldly sorrow is God's curse, and a bitter fruit of unbelief. They that sorrow for sin shall be comforted, Matt. v. 4, but they that mourn immoderately for outward losses, there shall be none to comfort them. This is the first piece of heart trouble which Jesus Christ hath forbidden, 'Let not your hearts be troubled:' that is, not filled, and overcome with worldly sorrow; whatever your losses and crosses be, let not your sorrow go beyond its lawful bounds; take heed, 'Let not your hearts be troubled.'

Secondly, Another piece of *heart trouble* is *sinful fear*. And against this distemper also Christ counselleth his disciples, 'Let not your hearts be troubled, nor let it be afraid,' as verse 27. As if he had said, Let not that distemper of base slavish fear sieze your hearts.

This fear is a passion, or rather a perturbation of mind, whereby, upon the sense of approaching evils, the mind is discomposed and disordered. and the heart troubled and dejected.

This fear is a tyrant where it comes. and it tyrannizeth where it prevails. as Job, iv. 14, 15. We

read how it prevailed over that famous believer, the father of believers, Abraham, to his prejudice, and to the discredit of his religion, who, for fear, denied his wife once and again, Genesis, xii. and Gen. xx. And good Isaac was taken in the same fault, Gen. xxvi. This fear troubles men's peace, and disquiets their minds, that they are said sometimes to be like the leaves of the forest: and this fear is often forbidden to Abraham, Gen. xv. 1. And to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 24. And when Israel was in the greatest dangers that ever men were, they were forbid to fear: Exod. xiv. 13. Isa. viii. 12. And in the New Testament, our Lord strongly cautions against this fear, Luke, xii. 4, 32. Rev. ii. 10. 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.' Slavish fear troubles the heart more than any thing.

Object. But may we not fear God's judgments? Did not good Josiah tremble at them? And did not holy David say, in Psalm cxix. 120. 'I am afraid of thy judgments?'

Ans. Doubtless, it is our duties so to do: When we see the same sins abound for which God hath executed his judgments in former times, we ought to lay them to heart, and to be affected, Jer. vii. 12. Luke, xvii. 26, &c. 'Remember Lot's wife,' said our Lord. So, 1 Cor. x. 2 Pet. ii. 6. Rom. i. 10. Zeph. iii. 6, 7, a remarkable scripture.

Although it went well with Nehemiah himself, yet had he a sad resentment of the state of Jerusalem, Nehem. i.

God's people have tender hearts, wicked men have hearts of stone: when God smites them they are not grieved, Jer. v. 3.

But we must distinguish of fear.

1. There is a natural lawful fear, when evils are approaching to our bodies, or names, or friends, or the like, dangers are apparent, it is natural to fear. This was in the best men in the world: it was in Christ himself, Mark, xii. 14, 15. Also it is said, 'He feared, and was sore amazed,' Mark, xiv 33, yet without sin.

2. There is a lawful filial fear of God's judgments, which ariseth from the consideration of the evil of sin, and of God's righteousness, of his hatred of sin, and his wrath against it; which fear produceth repentance, self-examination, a turning to God with our whole hearts, thorough reformation, and an endeavour to secure ourselves in God's covenant, and to hide ourselves. Prov. xxii. 3, 'A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.' A striving to get into Christ, and to get clear evidence of God's love to us in Christ. I say, such a fear that worketh these effects is a great duty.

3. There is a base slavish fear of approaching evils, arising from our misapprehensions of God; producing in us unworthy thoughts, sinking into despondency, and inciting to murmuring and impatience, and putting us upon sinful shifts, the use of unlawful means, to prevent or escape dangers; a fear of despondency, a vexatious, distracting fear, that drives from God, and unfits for service. A tormenting, disquieting fear, that unsettles and discomposeth our minds, disturbs our peace, suspends our acts of faith, and disposeth us to diffidence, distrust, and impatience; this is the fear that Christ would not have his people's heart troubled with.

Thirdly, Another piece of heart trouble is care, vexatious, distracting care, which our Lord would not have his disciples trouble themselves with, and therefore he useth so many powerful arguments to dissuade them from it, Matt. vi. from ver. 25, onward. 1st, He assures us, it is God that takes care for our bodily life, we trust him with that, how much more should we for food and raiment. 2dly, Saith he, Your Father takes care for the fowls, and provides for them. 'Are ye not much better than they?' 3dly, He clotheth the lilies, 'and will he not clothe you?' 4thly, You cannot by all your care make your condition better than God hath appointed it shall be, verse 27. 5thly, Your heavenly Father knows you want all

these things 6thly, They that are ignorant of God, and of his fatherly care and good providence, that have no God to care for them, they trouble themselves with those cares; therefore you should not do so who have a heavenly father that dearly loves you, and looks after you. 7thly, You have the promise of the faithful God, to have all necessities provided for you, while you make it your care to serve, and please, and trust him, ver. 23, 'All these things shall be added unto you.' 8thly, We have no cause to be thoughtful for time to come, because every day brings evil enough with it; and therefore it is no wisdom to perplex ourselves with cares, ver. last. So again, Luke, xxi. 34. Phil. iv. 6. 'Be careful in nothing; our Lord also shows us how prejudicial such cares are to our profiting by the word, Matt. xiii. 22. and expressly commands us, 'To cast our cares upon him, for he careth for us' 1 Pet. v. 7.

Fourthly, Despondency of spirit, dejectedness, distrust, discouragement, are other pieces of heart trouble. Such as was in David, Psal. cxlii. 3—5, and cxlii. 4, and Psal. xlii. 5. Casting down breeds disquietness, because it springs from pride, which is a turbulent passion, and every thing that crosseth and disappoints it, causeth a combustion in the mind: when a man cannot come down, and stoop to that condition that God casts him into, then is he discontented; and this comes from his pride.

A Christian should be very careful to keep up his spirits, when his condition in the world falls down. Could we but bring our minds to our conditions, to like and be pleased with our conditions, as being certainly persuaded that our present condition is best for us, it would be all as good, all as well, all as comfortable to us, as if we could bring our conditions to our minds, for one of these must be done, or else we shall never be free from heart trouble while we live; either our minds must be brought just even to, and suited and compliant to our conditions, be it sickness, poverty,

shame, prison, &c. or, our conditions must be suited just even to our minds. We have a mind to health, to liberty, &c. we must have them, or we are troubled. Now, this latter is wholly and altogether out of our power, we cannot 'add a cubit to our stature.' It is the Lord that appoints all our conditions for us; we cannot make our conditions happy, honourable, &c. of ourselves, and without God; but the former is in our power; by the help of God's Spirit of grace, we may bring our minds to our conditions; it is a holy art, attainable in the use of God's means. Contentment in, and with our condition, is the bringing of our minds to our conditions, to lie even, and suitable, and square one with the other: and this is, as I said, a holy art, attainable by Christians, Phil. iv. 11. Saint Paul had learned it, and so may other Christians. It is suitableness between our minds and our conditions, that breeds quiet and content; and if we have not quiet in our own minds, all outward comforts will do no more good than a silken stocking to a scabbed leg, or a golden slipper to a gouty foot.

Now, it is only God that can, but never will (except in wrath) bring any man's condition to his mind; for then his condition should be changed almost every moment; so mutable is man's mind: God will not bring the condition of the wicked to their mind, (except in wrath, as was said,) for, as their outward prosperity doth increase, so doth their desires after more: '*Cressit amor nummi,*' &c. And the wise man tells us, 'The eye is never satisfied with seeing.' And the more they have, the more they crave. *They can never have enough.* And for the godly themselves, they are not so free from covetousness as they should be, but still need to learn this lesson of contentment, and to be learning of it all their days. And most commonly if not always, God by his grace brings their minds to their conditions, and not their conditions to their minds. And for this, wise Agur prays, Prov. xxx. 9. Two dangerous extremes

he prays against, the one is poverty, that would breed discontent; in that his mind would be below his condition, debased to vile and sinful practices, as stealing, &c. The other is riches, that would breed discontent; in that his mind would be above his condition, and that would lift him up to base pride and forgetfulness of God; therefore he begs a suitableness and conveniency between his mind and his condition: 'Feed me with food convenient.'

Certainly we shall never be free from heart trouble, till our minds be brought suitable to our conditions, and such a frame would prevent casting down in time of affliction. To like our condition, to be pleased and satisfied with it, and with the holy will of God in it; that is, to be content, content with sickness, poverty, shame, prison, loss of relations and friends, &c. In a word, when our wills lie even with God's will, (as in all reason they should,) and our minds lie even with our conditions, then have we inward peace and tranquillity, quietness and contentment, and never till then; and then sickness is as good as health, and poverty, as good as riches; and a prison, &c. And this is that blessed frame of spirit we must labour for, and we ourselves shall have the sweetness of it; otherwise, it is in a man's mind, as it is with the body when bones are out of joint, there is nothing but pain and trouble; but this bringing of our minds to our conditions is as the setting of the bone again. Casting down ourselves, despondency, discouragement, which arise from discontent, are great pieces of heart trouble.

This distrust of God's providence is a grand evil: when we think we cannot live, unless we have a greater portion of earthly things, and this sets us upon carking cares, we know not how we and ours shall be provided for, &c. Now this we may cure, by casting ourselves upon God's promises, 1 Pet. v. 7. Psalm xxxiv. 10. lxxxiv. 11. Heb. xiii. 5. Let us cast ourselves on God's pro-

vidence: will he provide for ravens, lilies, and neglect his own children? It cannot be imagined.

Earthly things are but a vain show; they can give us no joy of heart, nor peace of conscience; they cannot add one cubit to our stature, nor one moment to our lives.

Moreover, this happy state of mind is attainable; Eli had it, 1 Sam. iii. 18, and, David, 2 Sam. xv. 25, 26. 'It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' Therefore let us labour for such a spirit; such a contented frame of mind is worth a kingdom; without it, godliness itself is not great gain; it must be laboured for: Paul said, he had learned it; it was a hard lesson, but sweet when learned.

Fifthly, Persecution may cause heart trouble; when men are offended. Matt. xiii. 21, when Peter was an offence to Christ, he was a trouble to him. Our Lord did on purpose foretell his disciples what persecutions they should undergo, that they might not be offended, John, xvi. 1. Forewarned, fore-armed. It is a blessed thing not to be offended at persecution for Christ. He foretold his disciples the night before his passion, that 'all of them should be offended at him that night,' Matt. xvi. 31, 56, which came to pass, for one of them openly denied him, and the rest forsook him and fled. To be troubled at persecution for Christ's sake, is to be offended at the cross of Christ: and that he would not have his disciples to be by any means, Mark, viii, last.

Object. But is it not said, Psalm cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they which love thy law,' and nothing shall offend them? How then come the people of God to be offended?

I answer, They that truly love God's law because they love God, such shall have peace with God, and with their own consciences, and that is great peace, and nothing shall offend them; that is, much trouble them, since they have peace with God, and with their own consciences. Outward losses and crosses are easily borne, they shall

make no breach upon their inward peace. They that have this character of God's children, will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon: therefore the reproaches cast on them, and on the ways of God, do not scandalize them. for they have found God in that very way which others speak evil of; they are not so offended by any thing that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless, we must take heed that we be not offended.

Sixthly, Temptations from Satan may cause heart trouble and vexation: Satan's suggestions, his fiery darts, these tormenting thoughts which he calls into the minds of Christ's disciples, create to them much disturbance and heart trouble. So soon as any man is plucked out of the devil's hands, by the mighty power of Christ's Spirit, he falls upon him speedily with all his force to trouble such a soul and vex it: so that he shall enjoy little peace if Satan can hinder it. So long as the devil keeps possession in the soul, he keeps all in peace, (a sad peace!) But when a stronger than he comes, and casteth out this strong man armed, then Satan rageth, to recover his lost captive soul, and vexeth that soul with all his temptations. But let not this break your peace, nor cause heart trouble. As Christ hath overcome the world, and therefore bids his disciples to be of good cheer, John, xvi. 33, so hath he also overcome the devil, he hath trodden this serpent under his feet already, and this prince of peace will tread him under your feet also shortly: therefore, 'Let not your hearts be troubled'

Seventhly, Desertion, another (and not the least) piece of heart trouble: this may be the case of Christ's disciples. We read of the saints complaining that God had forsaken them; and when he hideth his face, they cannot but be troubled.

Sometimes God doth but seem to hide his face, Isa. xlix. 14, 15. When God takes away their earthly comforts from them, and suffereth sharp and bitter afflictions to befall them; and though they cry unto him, he doth not remove them, then they think that God hath forsaken them.

Sometimes God doth really forsake his people, as to the sense of his favour, Isa. liv. 7, 8, 'For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment.' And this is, either by withholding comfort from them, which they cry for; or by withdrawing that comfort from them which they had, Psalm li. 11, and lxxviii. 1—3. 23, compared. Yet here God supported and sustained his servant's soul with grace many times. When God's people have least comfort, they have most grace, most humility, patience, self-denial, thirstings after God, heavenly mindedness, &c. God's people may lose the sense of his love, but never lose his love, for that is everlasting. But to lose the sense of his love is a grievous trouble to a gracious soul, that hath tasted and felt the love of God and his favour; for their great happiness is to have the favour of God; 'in his favour is life, and his loving kindness is better than life.' This is the joy of their lives, Psalm cxix. 135, which David so earnestly prayed for. Now such as have found this, must needs be troubled when they lose it.

Two things chiefly cause God to hide his face from his people.

1. When their hearts are too much set upon, and carried out after earthly comforts, Psalm xxx. 6, 7. Fleshly delight, and confidence in earthly things, provokes God to hide his face: When a man smiles so much on the world, and gives it so much room in his heart, God frowns, and is offended, that the gift should be so much loved, and the giver so neglected and forgotten.

2. When their hearts are let out too little after God, and there grows a strangeness between God

and them, and they begin to grow cold, dull, and dead in duty, then God withdraws and hides himself, Cant. ii. 3, 5, 6, compared. But no affliction like this; this disquieteth and dejecteth the people of God indeed. And as all the candles in the world cannot make it day when the sun is set, so all the comforts in the world cannot rejoice such a soul, nor can there be any day in such a soul, until 'the Sun of righteousness arise there with healing in his wings,' Mal. iv. 2.

So much for this third particular, showing what this heart trouble is, which our Lord here forbids his disciples, namely, worldly sorrow, sinful slavish fear, distracting care, despondency, dejectedness of Spirit, distrust, offence at persecution for Christ's sake, Satan's temptations, and spiritual desertions, all which may either be the causes, or the parts and pieces of heart trouble, which must be avoided.

The fourth particular to be opened, is to show how that believing in God and in Christ is the best antidote against this sinful heart trouble; Christ proposeth it as a special remedy.

Q. But how is it so?

A. to answer this, I shall endeavour to show these three things.

1. What this believing in God is, which our Saviour here grants that they had: 'Ye believe in God.'

2. What it is to believe in Christ: 'Believe also in me.'

3. That this faith acted on God and Christ is the best remedy to prevent and cure heart trouble, in all those several parts of it I have mentioned.

1. What this faith in God is? Briefly, the apostle tells us, Heb. xi. 6, it is to believe that God is, that there is a God, an infinite first and best Being; to believe that God is that, all that, which he hath revealed himself in his word to be; viz. that he is an 'all-sufficient, almighty, only wise God; a righteous, gracious, merciful God: a

holy God, a loving God.' He proclaims his name himself, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7*, 'the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,' &c. To believe that he is 'wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working,' *Isa. xxviii, last*. That he is the Father of mercies, the true and faithful God, the God of all grace, and of all consolation; with many more admirable attributes of God doth the Scripture furnish us, that we may build our faith, and place our trust in him, to prevent heart trouble, and to cure it when it hath seized on us. Whatsoever is revealed of God in his word, that true faith believes.

Also this faith in God, is to believe that 'he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

That he being God all sufficient, he is able to support, to supply, to deliver his people out of all their troubles, and that he is willing so to do, as well as able, for he hath promised; and he is a rewarder, a God that will abundantly, plentifully reward all his suffering ones; great shall be their reward in heaven, *Matt. v. 12*. And to believe God to be a rewarder, is to lay hold on his covenant, wherein he promiseth so to be: I will be thy God, 'thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward,' *Gen. xv. 1*. The sum of the covenant is, 'I will be thy God;' what is that but this, 'I will be all that to thee, and I will do all that for thee which a God can be to thee,' and do for thee. I will be a 'sun and a shield to thee,' *Psal. lxxxiv, last*. I will give thee grace and glory, and will withhold no good thing from thee. I that am the infinite first and best being of all things, the living fountain of all mercy, the original of all power and goodness; I will be a God to thee, thy God, thy Father, if thou wilt take me for thy God, and place all thy happiness in me, and wilt become my servant, and give up thyself sincerely to me, to serve and obey, to love and fear, and trust me only. This is to believe in God, to accept of God for our God, and to yield up ourselves to him to be his people, *Isaiah, lvi. 46*, to choose

the things that please him; to give him our hearts, and become his servants, as Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. And so God proposed himself to Abraham, when he called him, Gen. xii. 1—3, as a rewarder; and more fully, Gen. xv. 1, 'I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;' and so Abraham's faith was to act on God so manifested: and Gen. xvii. 1. I am God-all-sufficient; all-sufficient to support thee in thy way, and work, and all-sufficient to reward thee in the end; therefore be thou upright and faithful let not thy heart be troubled whatever dangers and difficulties thou meetest with in my way and work, and what losses soever thou sustainest for my sake, believe 'I am God all-sufficient;' I will sufficiently reward thee, thou shalt be no loser by following and serving me. Also 'Moses his faith had an eye to the recompense of reward,' Heb. xi. 26. And that you may see that this is not legal and mercenary, our Lord Jesus proposeth this as an encouragement to his people, Matt. v. 12, 'Great is your reward in heaven.' And he himself took encouragement from it, as Heb. xii. 1, 2, 'for the joy that was set before him,' &c.

So that this is to believe in God, to believe that God is really and truly, he is all that which he hath revealed himself to be, and to believe that he is a rewarder, &c. This faith in God, Christ took for granted that his disciples had; 'Ye believe in God;' ye believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. And if ye believe this, let not your hearts be troubled; be not afraid nor dejected, but act your faith in God, and seriously consider what God that is, in whom you believe; and believing also your interest in that God, that he is your God, this God all-sufficient is your God, you will have no cause to be troubled. Your acting of faith on God, your God, will prevent and cure your heart trouble, and that these several ways.

First, more generally.

He that believes in God as his God, believes

God is always present with him, according to his promises. In the worst times God is present with his people. And can there be any cause of heart trouble to such souls as have always the presence of God with them, whose presence makes heaven, and in whose 'presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore?' Psalm xvi. 11. Surely, beloved, this will prevent heart trouble, when a soul can act his faith, and firmly believe it. God is always present with his people, and that for gracious purposes, (and not as a bare spectator,) as to proportion and measure out their afflictions to them, that they may not be above their strength, nor more than need, 1 Cor. x. 13. 1 Pet. i. 6. All the afflictions of God's people are measured by the hand of the most wise, most merciful, and gracious God; all the malice of men and devils cannot add a drachm to the weight, nor a drop to the measure, beyond God's appointment. He is present to order and fix the time of our sufferings, it is an hour of temptation, Rev. ii. 10. It is our loving Father that sets up the glass of the time of our troubles; he appoints their beginning, their duration, their end; he holds the glass in his own hand. All the powers on earth cannot bring trouble on us, till the hour come, till the appointed time, nor continue our troubles longer than his time; 'The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous,' Psalm cxxv. 3. God is present to mix some comforts with the cross, thereby to allay the bitterness of it, present to support the soul with inward strength, Psalm cxxxviii. 3, 'Thou strengthenest me with strength in my soul:' present to sanctify afflictions for good, and at length in his good time, which is the best time, when he hath perfected his own work in his people, he is present for their full deliverance.

A true believer in God, hath always a God to go unto: O what a comfort, what a happiness is that! he dwells in the love of God as well in

affliction as out of it; he may be cast out of his happy condition in the world, but never out of the favour of his God: this believed by us, will cure heart sorrow, heart fear, heart care, all despondency, dejectedness, disquietments, and distractions whatever. Faith acted on God, the almighty, all-sufficient God, and our God, always present with us, is the sovereign antidote against, and the best cure of, all heart trouble, Psalm cxlii. 1—4, there are the Psalmist's troubles; and verse 5, there is his cure; 'I cried unto thee, O Lord, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living.' So, Psalm cxliii. 4, 6, 8, his spirit was overwhelmed with trouble; but he cried to God, and trusted in him, and that was his relief; his trusting in God was a high exercise of his faith. This kept David from sinking under his great distress: 1 Samuel, xxx. 6, 'He encouraged himself in the Lord his God.' Thus in general.

More particularly I shall endeavour to show what there is in God that a believer's faith fetcheth virtue from to cure his heart trouble in his greatest distress, even under the loss of the personal presence of his best and dearest friends on earth; for such was like to be the case of the disciples in the text.

First, That in God which faith looks unto, and fetcheth comfort from, is his sweet and gracious nature. God is love, the very element of love, 1 John, iv. 16, and his gracious name, which discovers his nature, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 'The Lord, gracious and merciful.' When he gives to his people, he gives in love; when he takes, he takes in love. Now when a soul believes that all is from love, and all in love, he is supported. When a man can believe that all his troubles come to him from the Father of mercies, and his Father in Christ, he cannot but bear them patiently.' 'Ye believe in God,' said Christ, ye believe that God loves you, therefore, 'let not your hearts be troubled.'

Q. But how shall I know that God loves me when he afflicts me ?

I answer, When we can discern that we have received any spiritual benefit by any affliction, we may certainly conclude that the love of God was in that affliction. Fury is not in God toward his people, Isa. xxvii. 4. And he intends nothing but our profit; all his ends are for our good: to purge away our sins, to wean us from the world, to draw us nearer to himself, to humble us, to try us, to conform us to Christ, to prepare us for glory, &c. Now seeing God's ends are so much for our good, we must conclude, that all our afflictions proceed from his love; and when we find any of those ends accomplished in us, and on us, and that we have received real spiritual good by them, we ought to be strengthened in our belief, that God hath corrected us in love; so that faith acted on the love of God in our affliction, will prevent or cure our heart trouble. Our Lord told his disciples, 'that the Father had loved them,' John, xvi. 27.

Secondly, Faith acted upon God's glorious attributes, will fortify against heart trouble.

First, Upon his all sufficiency. Ye believe that God is all sufficient in, and of himself alone; every way able to supply all wants, to make up and repair all losses, to satisfy all desires, to sustain under all burdens, and that without all earthly comforts; for, how else are the saints in heaven happy, who have none of these earthly enjoyments? Ye believe this, act your faith on it. He must needs be all sufficient who made the world, and all things in it, and upholds it to this day; he that owns all things, and is possessor of heaven and earth, he it is that is your God, your Father: act your faith on him, and be comforted.

Secondly, He is all-mighty; you believe this. So Christ hath told his disciples, 'All things are possible to God.' He can break the hardest heart, and can bind up the most broken spirit:

he can make up the greatest loss. 'We are kept by the mighty power of God,' 1 Pet. i. 5. Oh, how safe is that man that is in the love and covenant, and that lies in the arms and bosom of the almighty God, Deut. xxxiii. 27. He can bring light out of darkness, and make the greatest loss to prove the greatest gain. He hath the keys of the grave; to him belongs the issues from death. All power belongeth to him; nothing is too hard for him.

Thirdly, His absolute sovereignty and supremacy: All souls are his, Ezek. xviii. 4. He gives, he takes, who can hinder him? May he not do with his own what pleaseth him? Ye believe this. Hath he not a right in all the work of his hands, and may he not dispose of all as he will?

Fourthly, His unchangeableness. God is in one mind, Job, xxiii. 13, 14. The thoughts of his heart stand to all generations. He sets bounds to the sea, to the life of man, and to all the comforts of life; the number of his months is with God, Job, xiv. 5. Believe this.

Fifthly, His wisdom. God is only wise, the fountain of wisdom; he doth all he doth in infinite wisdom. He is wise in heart, and worketh all things according to the counsel of his will. He knows what is best for us; when to give, when to take, and what will do us most good. Believe this, 'and let not your hearts be troubled.'

Sixthly, His righteousness. All his ways are just and equal: yea, when clouds and darkness are round about him, (his providences toward us dark,) yet then 'righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.' God, the judge of the world, can do no wrong; believe this of God, and it will quiet your minds.

Lastly, His faithfulness. 'In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me,' saith holy David, Psalm cxix. 75. He hath promised, he will withhold no good thing from his people. Now he sees and knows that afflictions are good for them, good for their souls; his daily rod as good for their souls as his

daily bread is for their bodies. Therefore he brings afflictions on them, and so makes good his promise to them. O believe this, 'and let not your hearts be troubled.' Certainly, faith acted on God's attributes will support under the greatest strokes, and most grievous losses.

Thirdly, Faith acted on the covenant of grace. God's everlasting covenant will help to support under trouble. Ye believe in God, that God hath made a covenant with you, to become your God, Jer. xxxi. 33, 'I will be your God, and ye shall be my people.' This is infinitely more, for God to become our God, to give himself to us, than if he had said, I will give you crowns and kingdoms, sons and daughters: when God saith, 'I will be your God,' he saith 'I will be all that to you, and I will do all that for you, and bestow all that upon you, which a God can be, or do, and which shall make you most happy for ever. I will pardon your sins; I will give you new hearts, give you my Spirit; I will give you grace here, and glory hereafter. This acting of faith in God's covenant supported David in his greatest troubles, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5, a notable text; when the Lord had made breach upon breach in his family, this comforted him, 'that God had made with him an everlasting covenant.' That he was in covenant with God; that God was his God in covenant; this balanced all his losses, and repaired all the breaches made in his relations: though his family was wasted and blasted, this answered all, that 'he was in covenant with God.'

This is the language of faith; If God be my God, if I be his child, born of him, reconciled to him, pardoned, justified, sanctified, in covenant with him; why am I troubled, though he give me neither health, nor wealth, nor friends, nor relations? have not I enough, in having God to be my God? is not God more than all? but if God be not my God, I have cause enough to be troubled then, considering the danger I am in; and my trouble, for this should swallow up all other trouble. For

surely, either God is mine in covenant, or he is not; If he be mine in covenant, then, though he break my family, make breaches upon all my earthly comforts; yet, he will not break his covenant, Psalm lxxxix. 32, and so long I am well enough. If he leave me neither son nor daughter, if he strip me of friends, estate, liberty, health, &c. yet he remains my God still; and so long it is well enough: it cannot be ill with a man so long as God is his; ye believe this.

Fourthly, Faith acted upon the word of God, will support the soul; ye believe God's word, the word of truth, Psalm cxix. 50, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me.' So, ver. 92, 'Had not thy law been my delight, I had perished in my affliction.'

First, Consider the word of precept: as in the text, it is Christ's command, 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Many such commands we have in Scripture, as, 'not to fear, not to be cast down: sorrow not as those that have no hope.' 1 Thess. iv. 13, 14, and such like. Now faith applies such commands to the soul; I must not be troubled in my heart, God forbids it. Why must we not profane the sabbath, nor swear, nor lie, &c. but because God hath forbidden these evils? So here, God hath forbidden us to be troubled, and commanded us to be quiet, patient contented, submissive to his will in all his dealings; thus we should urge God's command on our souls: yea, we are commanded to be so far from troubling ourselves when afflictions befall us, as that we must 'count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations,' James, i. 2. And to rejoice in sufferings; for 'blessed is the man that endureth temptation,' James, i. 12.

Secondly, Consider the word of promise; Many exceeding great and precious promises are in the word of God, which are as full feast for faith to feed upon. God promiseth to be 'our God, to be with us in the fire, and in the water,' Isaiah, xli. 10. xliii. 2, to support and sustain us,

'to lay no more upon us than he will enable us to bear,' 1 Cor. x. 13. 'That all things shall work together for our good,' Rom. viii. 28. And what can we desire more? There is no trouble that can befall us, but we may find a promise suitable to it: and 'faithful is he that hath promised, who also will do it,' 1 Thess. v. 24. And why hath the great God so wonderfully condescended to poor creatures, as to make so many sweet promises which are recorded in the holy Scriptures, but for this, that 'the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, Heb. vi. 17, and that their hearts might not be troubled?

Thirdly, The word of threatening; Matt. x. 37, 'He that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, (so husband or wife,) more than me, is not worthy of me,' saith Christ. Now by our immoderate sorrow for the loss of these, we manifest our immoderate love of these; we should consider, that when these are removed, that Christ remains ours still, and with us still; our relation to him is not broken: and Christ will be instead of all and better than all to us, and this should keep us from heart trouble.

Fourthly, The examples of God's saints in the world. We should consider also, what a famous example is Abraham, who was content to part with his Isaac, at the command of God, his only son, the son of his old age, the son of the promise, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; yea, content to lay his own hands upon him, to slay him, and burn him: but when he was tried, God spared him, Gen. xxii. 12. The way to keep our earthly comforts, is to be willing to part with them when God calls for them. So Eli, when very sad tidings was told him, 'It is the Lord,' said he, 'let him do what seemeth him good,' 1 Sam. iii. 18. So Aaron, when that heavy stroke fell upon him, that both his sons were struck dead upon the place for their sin, and it may be in their sin too, it is said, 'Aaron held his peace,' Lev. x. 3. So Job stript

of all his friends at once, 'The breath of his wife was strange to him.' And David complained that 'lover and friend was put far from him.' Now we should consider these examples, and set faith a work on them and know, that it is our duty 'to be followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises,' Heb. vi. 12.

Fifthly, The word of experience. David tells us his experience, and saith, 'It was good for him that he had been afflicted.' And many Christians living can and do bless God for their afflictions, and that God, by taking away of their relations from them, he made more room in their hearts for himself, and communicated more of himself to their souls: thus by acting of faith upon the word of God, we may gain support, and be preserved from heart trouble.

Fifthly, Faith acted upon the work of God, will support under heart trouble. Eccles. vii. 13, 'Consider the work of God.' Faith looks to the work of God; who it is that killeth, who it is that taketh away; who can stop, or mend, or hinder his work? This disquieted David's heart when the stroke of God was heavy upon him; 'I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,' Psalm xxxix. 9. It is the Lord, he hath done it. It is he that doth whatsoever he pleaseth.

Sixthly, Faith acted on the will of God. Faith resigns up all to the good and holy will of God: so did our Lord himself, 'Not my will, but thine be done.' Luke, xxii. 42, and so we pray continually, 'Thy will be done:' and therefore when it is done, our hearts must not be troubled.

Lastly, Faith acted on the gracious ends and designs of God, in afflicting us, and removing our earthly comforts from us, will prevent heart trouble. God hath holy and good ends which faith looks unto; God aims at our profit; as Heb. xii. 10. Such ends as these,

1. God's end is, to discover and purge away our sins, Isa. xxvii. 9 'By this shall the iniquity of

Jacob be purged, this is all the fruit to take away his sin.'

2. To try and exercise our graces, Job, xxii. 6.
10. 1 Peter, i. 7.

3. To crucify our hearts unto, and to estrange our affections from, the things of this world.

4. To draw our hearts nearer to himself. Therefore many times God takes away our earthly comforts from us, because they had too much of our hearts, and because they lay between God and our hearts, and kept us at a distance from him.

5. To bestow greater, and better mercies upon us. God never takes away any darling comfort from his people, but his design is, to give a better in the room of it; as in the text. Christ leaves his disciples, in regard of his bodily presence, because he would send the comforter to them, which should abide with them for ever, John, xiv. 16.

6. To make them partakers of his holiness, Heb. xii. 10.

7. To fit and prepare them for that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. These are God's holy and good ends in afflicting his people, unto which faith looks, and so supports the heart.

Thus you see how faith acted on God in these particulars, will prevent or cure all our heart trouble: faith acted on the sweet and gracious nature of God; he is love, all love; on his glorious attributes, his all-sufficiency, his omnipotency, his absolute sovereignty, unchangeableness, his wisdom, his righteousness, his faithfulness: faith acted on God's gracious everlasting covenant, on the word of God, on the word of precept, of promise, of threatening, of example, of experience. And faith acted on the work of God, on the will of God; and on his holy ends in all his chastisements. I say, faith thus acted on God, will exceedingly support under all trouble. 'Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God.' So much of this first particular. And before I

enter upon the second, I shall make some short application of this:

First, It follows hence, that heart trouble under the afflicting hand of God, argues the weakness, if not the want of faith. All those sorts of heart trouble, and the parts of it which I have mentioned, as heart sorrow, worldly sorrow, immoderate mourning, sinful fear, vexatious care, despondency of spirit, being offended; disturbance of mind, distraction, dejection, discouragement, and the like, all these flow from the want of faith, or at least, from the weakness of faith in God. We do not believe in God; we see the causes of our troubles, they are mostly in ourselves, even our unbelief. Whatever we profess, we do not believe in God; if we could but believe in God, our hearts would not be troubled. O our want of faith; let us heartily lament it, and cry to God for pardon through the blood of Christ. If our hearts be troubled, where is our faith in God? What doth God, and all that is in God, signify to us? What are we the better for all that infinite all-sufficiency and goodness, that is in God, if we do not act faith upon it? Our heart troubles would be cured, could we act faith on God as we ought to do.

Immoderate sorrow then is very unbecoming believers in God. If we will prove ourselves believers in God, let us discharge ourselves from heart trouble, and let us draw out consolation for our hearts by faith, from all those comfortable considerations of God, and from all those abundant excellences that are in God; O let us labour for faith, and act it: let us live in the exercise of it, and then surely we shall find comfort.

Secondly, Let us all labour to get an interest in God, by faith in Jesus Christ, that so we may be able to look upon God as our God, and then we may claim an interest in all that God is, and in all that God hath, and so shall we have no cause of heart trouble in any condition. For if

God be ours, all his attributes are ours, his gracious covenant is ours, his word and promises are ours. All is ours; therefore should we labour in this above all things, spending all our thoughts, affections, and spirits upon this. O let us lay hold on God and his covenant; let us choose him for our portion, and resign up our whole selves unfeignedly to him, terminating and centring all our desires, hope, love, delight in him alone, placing all our happiness in him, and then commit all to him. 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee,' Psalm lxxiii. 25.

Secondly, What is it to believe in Christ? For saith he in the text, 'Believe also in me.' It is God in Christ that we must believe in; not in God without Christ, not in God out of Christ, but believe in God in Christ.

Now what this believing in Christ is, I shall endeavour to show; looking up to the Father of lights, and to the author and finisher of our faith for light and assistance.

In general it is to believe all that which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures concerning Christ, to believe the record that God hath given of him in his word, as 1 John, v. 10—13. To believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, John, i. 18. That he came out from the Father; was made flesh; took upon him our nature; was born of a virgin; lived on earth in the form of a servant, a poor despicable life; preached the gospel, working miracles, &c. That he suffered upon the cross, with all the sins of his people upon his soul and body; that he bore the cross of the law, the wrath of God, which was due to man for sin; that he died a most painful, shameful, and cruel death, dying as a sacrifice, to satisfy God's justice, to atone and pacify his wrath, to make our peace, and to reconcile us to God; that he rose again from the dead, ascended into heaven, to prepare a place there for his people; that he sitteth at the right hand of God everlasting, to make continual

intercession for us: and that he shall come to judge the world at the last day; and while he is absent from us in person here on earth, he promised to send his Spirit the Comforter into the world, to convince and convert all those which his Father hath given him, to call them by his word, to quicken, strengthen, stablish, comfort, and confirm them until he come again, 'to take them to himself, that where he is, they may be also,' John. xvi. 1, 2. This is the record that God hath given of his Son; 'that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life,' John, iii. 16, 36. Now, to believe in Christ, is to believe all this testimony of him. And also, out of a deep sense of our sin and misery, and sight of Christ's infinite excellency, all-sufficiency, and willingness to save sinners; and upon his call to us in the gospel, to come unto him weary and heavy laden with our sins, heartily willing to accept of the Lord Jesus upon his own terms, to take him for our only Lord, to give up our whole selves, souls and bodies, to his blessed government by his word and spirit in all things, and unfeignedly and unreservedly to enter into covenant with him, to become his, and his alone, and his for ever; and to rely upon him for life, for grace, and salvation; this is to believe in Christ. Thus to believe in Christ. 'and let not your hearts be troubled.' The acting of this faith on blessed Jesus, is a singular means to prevent and cure all heart trouble, all heart sorrows, cares, fears, vexations, despondencies, dejections, and distractions whatsoever, that may arise in our hearts, by reason of any loss, cross, disappointment, distress, or affliction, that may befall us. If we can but thus believe in Christ, and rest and rely upon him, and trust in him, our hearts shall not be troubled.

Q. But what is that in Christ which faith must act upon, to effect this cure of heart trouble when afflictions come upon us?

A. Such like things (as I showed before) as are in God for faith to act upon, which are these that follow:

First, Faith must be acted upon the loving, gracious, sweet nature of Jesus Christ. Our Lord Jesus is of a most loving and sweet nature, he is love indeed, the Son of his Father's love, and altogether lovely. His thoughts of us who believe in him, were thoughts of love from everlasting. All his words are sweet, his mouth is most sweet. O what sweet language doth he give his church! 'My dove, my love, my fair one, my sister, my spouse,' &c. Cant. v. 5. 16. 'He loved us, and gave himself for us, loved us and washed us in his blood,' Rev. i. 6. He is one of our nature, our kinsman, our husband, our father, our elder brother, &c. So that, if there be any love in the head to the members, if any in the father to the child, if any in the husband to the wife, or in any near and dear relation, then sure, there is love, strong love in Jesus Christ to all believers; for in him is the love of all relations, and therefore he expresseth it under all these relations. He calls us his friends. He is of a most tender, a most merciful nature, full of bowels of compassion, and of tender mercies. It would be endless to express the loving nature of Jesus Christ to poor believers; which when a believer duly considers, ponders upon, and acteth faith upon, it cannot but support him under all heart trouble.

Act your faith on Christ as yours, your Jesus, he that died for you, he that sweated great drops of blood for you in the garden, wrestling and grappling with his Father's wrath for you in your name and stead there, and upon the cross. Consider, that this your dearest Jesus, now in glory, knows your souls in adversity; he seeth all the trouble of your hearts, he sympathizeth with you in all your afflictions; his heart, now in heaven, 'is touched with the feeling of your infirmities on earth, Heb. iv. 15. He hath human nature still, though glorified. He feels our losses, crosses, griefs, pains, and sorrows; his heart, his most tender heart, is affected. O that we could but believe this! and thus consider with ourselves;

Here I sit solitary as a widow, or a widower, or childless, or fatherless, or motherless, or friendless; my family is broken, I feel pains and sicknesses; I am deprived of my liberty; my sweet relations and comfortable friends are laid in the dust; I have none about me to counsel or comfort me; I am brought low in the world, my estate is diminished, my honour and reputation lost, my pleasure gone, my flesh faileth me, my strength faileth, lovers and friends fail me, &c. Such complaints we are apt enough to make, and it may be worse than these: my God hath forsaken me, he hides his face from me; I am compassed about with temptations, sad, dejecting and distracting thoughts; I am persecuted, banished from house and home, all my outward and inward comforts fail me. These have been the cases and conditions of God's dearest servants, as Job, David, Heman, and others; but yet let not your hearts be troubled for all this; 'ye believe in God, act your faith on God, yea, and act it on Christ also: believe in Jesus, look up by faith unto Jesus your dear Lord; whatsoever, whomsoever you have lost you have not lost your Jesus, your best friend, your heavenly husband; you have his eye, his tender, watchful, provident eye upon you still; you have his ear open to your cries still; yea, you have his everlasting arms underneath you to sustain you still, for else you would sink. Oh then, act faith upon the sweet nature of Christ, as your head and husband. 'Can a mother forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?' Isa. xlix. 14, possibly she may: but can Jesus forget those whom he died for, and travailed for? No, no, he will not hide his face for ever, he will never forget his people. Your maker is your husband; and he is the Father of mercies.

If we read these things, or hear them read, and do not apply them to our own souls by faith; if we do not meditate on them, and let them sink down into our hearts, if we do not pray earnestly

that the Holy Spirit would bring them home, and lay them close to and fix them on our hearts, they will do us no good, yield us no comfort; therefore meditate on them, and apply them.

Secondly, We must act faith upon the many precious attributes of Jesus Christ; all which will afford to faith much matter of support under all our heart troubles whatever. And these are exceeding many; I shall mention only some.

First, Jesus Christ is our advocate with the Father, 1 John, ii. 1, 2. One that undertaketh for us to plead our cause, in that highest court of heaven. If a man be sued in law, or be accused of any crime in any court, it is a great privilege to have a solicitor there for him, that is skilful and faithful, and powerful with the judge in that court. Jesus Christ is such an advocate, or solicitor, for us in heaven; he will plead our cause, and he is wise; he is the wisdom of the Father; he is a great counsellor, and the only counsellor; none else can plead in that high court; and he is most faithful; he is a 'merciful and faithful high priest in all things pertaining to God,' Heb. ii. 17. He appears for us in heaven, Heb. ix. 24. When a man is indicted in a court, and hath none to appear for him there, he is in a bad case; but all poor believers are in a better case; they have a blessed advocate to appear in the presence of God for them; he continually presents his blood, his sacrifice to the Father for them, Heb. x. 10. And it is his will, to have that sacrifice accepted for our justification and sanctification. Christ prevails so with his Father, that he always heareth him, John, xi. 43. Now if we can act faith on this blessed advocate in heaven, who is there always pleading for us, ever living to make continual intercession for us, Rom. iii. 25, presenting himself before God as our sacrifice and propitiation: when men accuse us, and our own consciences too; when we are deprived of our near and dear relations, distressed with pains and sicknesses, pinched with wants and necessities; I say, then, for us to act our faith

on this precious advocate at the right hand of God for us, interceding there for us, one who knows and feels all our misery, it must needs be a great support and relief to us, and the best remedy against our heart troubles: O that we could act faith strongly on this our advocate.

To have a friend in heaven, and such a friend, so wise, so powerful, so faithful, so merciful, so sensibly affected with all our misery, so tender, so able, and so willing to hear and help us; I say, this is infinitely better than all the friends that ever we had, or could have on earth: and this friend ever liveth, and maketh continual intercession for us. And as this is matter of comfort in case of suffering, so in case of sin too: 'If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and he is the propitiation for our sins,' 1 John, ii. 1, 2. Faith acted on this blessed advocate, is the best remedy against heart trouble.

Secondly, Jesus Christ is bread from heaven; the true bread for souls, the bread of life, the water of life, John, vi. 35, 48, 51. Now when poor saints are fed with the bread of affliction, and with the water of adversity, let them look up to Christ, and act faith upon him, he will be living bread, life-giving bread, living waters to their souls, to revive their drooping, and to refresh their fainting spirits. By acting faith on this blessed Jesus, the fountain of living waters, their souls shall be so satisfied, as that they shall never hunger more, never thirst more (that is, inordinately) after the things of this world. When your souls want strength to bear your burdens, want comfort in your distresses, act faith on this Jesus, this water of life, and you shall be refreshed; you shall have joy and peace in believing, Rom. xv. 13.

Thirdly, Jesus Christ is called 'the Sun of righteousness, and the bright morning-star,' Mal. iv. 3. Rev. xxii. 16. He is the fountain of righteousness and life, as the sun is of light: he hath healing in his wings. 'He was wounded for our transgressions, that by his stripes we might be

healed,' Isa. liii. 4, 5, and lxi. 1, 2. He was appointed to heal the broken hearted, Luke, iv. 'He will heal our backslidings,' Hos. xiv. 4. He is the great physician, he can heal our spiritual and corporeal diseases. His blood is a healing blood; his spirit a healing spirit; his word, a healing word; his promises, healing promises. He hath all healing virtue in him: he is the true brazen serpent; could we but act faith on this Jesus, we should be healed of all our diseases. He is the bright morning star. We are in darkness, clouds and darkness upon our spirits; many dark provinces befall us, we see not our way many times, know not what to do; now let us act faith on Jesus, he will bring light out of darkness: we are under black fears and sorrows, and all dark night sometimes with us; but if we can look up to this bright morning-star, he will enlighten our darkness, he will shine in upon our hearts, and scatter all those clouds, and give us a joyful morning.

Fourthly, Jesus Christ is called the 'Captain of the Lord's hosts, and the captain of our salvation,' Job, v. 24. 15. Heb. ii. 10. He hath the command of all the creatures, for he is 'head over all things,' Eph. i. 22, over men and devils; 'all power in heaven and earth is his,' Matt. xxviii. 18. O if we could act faith on this almighty Jesus, our hearts would not be troubled for any thing: What can hurt us? What should we fear? Our blessed Jesus, our Saviour, our husband, commands all things; he rules, and over-rules all things; no creature, no man, no devil, can act any thing against us without our Lord's leave. Believe in this Captain, and let not your hearts be troubled, 'He will tread Satan under your feet shortly,' Rom. xvi. 20. He will make all his and our enemies his footstool. Let us look by faith unto our Captain, and keep our eye on him, and follow him wheresoever he goeth. Let us make him our leader, and by faith in him we shall be more than conquerors. He hath overcome the devil and the world for us, and he will overcome all our corruptions, fears, and

sorrows in us, and will shortly set his crown upon our heads. Christ is the captain of our salvation: 'and in bringing of many sons to glory, he was made perfect through suffering,' Heb. ii. 14. John, xvi. last. Act faith in him who hath perfected our salvation for us: that work is done, and it was through suffering, to teach us to be willing to suffer also: to walk in his steps; for in the way of suffering he entered into his glory; and the very same way will he bring all his sons and daughters unto glory: so that while we are suffering for him, or from him, if we be his children we are in the right and ready way to glory. And then have we any cause to let our hearts be troubled with sinful fears, cares, and sorrows? have we any cause to be cast down and discouraged while we are following our captain, are making comformable to him, travelling the same way to heaven that he went thither, the same way to glory, the way of reproach, shame, grief, sorrow, fear, poverty, persecution, tribulation, desertion, the same steps that our Lord went to glory? O that we could but still keep our eye on Jesus, and often consider what way he went to heaven; and being our captain, we should show ourselves his good soldiers, and be content to go the same way.

Fifthly, Jesus Christ is called the 'consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25; a sweet name indeed. He is the only person that brings true comfort, being the fountain of the spring of all consolation; that one of a thousand, who gave himself a ransom for us. He it is that 'comforteth his people in all their tribulations,' 2 Cor. i. 3, 4. He it is that speaketh and giveth his peace to his people; and when he giveth peace, none can cause trouble. And it is his promise, that when he hath brought his people into the wilderness of fears and troubles, that they know not which way to turn, that then he will speak comfortably to them, will speak to their hearts, Hos. ii. 14.

I might largely show here that Jesus Christ is

the consolation of his people many ways; as, by his coming from his Father into the world to become our surety, to undertake for us, to take our sins upon him, and to make his soul an offering for our sins, and by his blood to purchase our remission, Ephes. i. 7. O how comfortable is a surety to one that is arrested, indicted, and arraigned! How comfortable is a redeemer to a poor miserable captive! How comfortable is a pardon to a condemned malefactor! All this is Jesus to his people, and infinitely more. He is gold to make us rich, white raiment to cover our nakedness, eye-salve to make us see, Rev. iii. 17, 18. He is light, John v. 12, the light of life, the fountain of life, of spiritual and eternal life: no life but by him. And he hath assured us, that, 'whosoever cometh to him, and believeth in him, shall have everlasting life, and shall not come in condemnation, John, iii. 16. 36. He is 'afflicted in all our afflictions, Isa. lxxiii. 9. And is not this a comfortable consideration? All his promises are so many breasts of consolation, all his ordinances, means of consolation: his word, a word of consolation; yea, his rod of affliction, as well as his staff, is blessed for the comfort of his people, Ps. xxiii. He hath also promised to send his Spirit, the Comforter, to his people, 'to abide with them for ever,' John, xvi. 7. Yea, Christ himself makes this his own special work, also, to 'comfort them that mourn,' Isa. lxi. 2, and hath 'blessed those that mourn,' Mat. v. 4, that is, with godly sorrow, for, saith he, 'they shall be comforted.'

How greatly then doth it concern us to believe in this Jesus, the consolation of Israel, to look by faith to this fountain of comfort, look to his office, look to his word and promises; beg him earnestly to send the Spirit, the Comforter, into your hearts look to Jesus alone for all comfort, and draw from this spring by prayer, faith, and meditation, all supplies of comfort; and 'let not your hearts be troubled.'

Sixthly, Jesus Christ is called a 'counsellor,' Isa. ix. 6. He is most wise; he is the 'wisdom of the Father. in him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge,' Col. ii. 3. Yea, he is made of God our wisdom, 1 Cor. i. 30. So that when we are in doubts and darkness, perplexed with temptations, and know not what to do; when we are under sad and dark providences, and know not how to interpret them: when we are under various exercises, and know not how to answer God's ends in them, nor how to improve them; when we are in the dark, and know not the meaning of God's dispensations, nor the design of God in them: now are our hearts troubled in all such cases; but here is our remedy, this is the course we must take: act faith now upon Jesus, he is wisdom, he is a most wise and faithful counsellor, we may freely open all our cases and conditions to him; he will not betray us, nor bewray us, we may safely trust him with all the secrets of our hearts: and let us labour by faith to trust him for counsel, in all cases; let us wait for his counsel, trust to it, and 'let not our hearts be troubled.'

Seventhly, Jesus is a Redeemer, that is his name; he came into the world on this very business, to redeem his people, to redeem them from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14, 'from this present evil world; from our vain conversations.' He hath shed his precious blood to purchase us, 'we are bought with a price,' 1. Cor. vi. 20. We are none of our own, we are his, the purchase of his blood; and we may be confident that he dearly loves us, for he dearly bought us; and if he had not dearly loved us, he would never have given himself for us, Gal. ii. 20. That was the highest testimony of his love; 'he loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood,' Rev. i. 6. He will redeem us from the wrath to come. O then let us act faith on our sweet Redeemer, as Job did in the midst of all his troubles; 'I know,' saith he, 'that my Redeemer liveth,' &c. So may every be

never say, although my friends and dearest relations die, my credit and estate dies; though my outward comforts all die, this supports me, that my Redeemer liveth, and this our Redeemer is mighty, mighty to save, able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25.

Therefore let us act faith on our dear Redeemer and upon his redemption; and let us believe that shortly the day of our full redemption will come, when we shall be delivered fully and for ever from sin, Satan, and the world; from all our burdens, fears, and sorrows, temptations and tribulations.

I might mention many other sweet names and titles of Jesus Christ, which would be food for faith to feed upon; as, that he is the 'everlasting Father,' Isa. ix. 6, he hath pity and compassion for all his poor children, and power to help them, being the Father Almighty, and hath a portion for them too; he is their portion, and hath provided for them 'an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' 1 Pet. i. 4. He is the Prince of peace; he giveth his peace to his people, even that peace that the world can neither give to them, nor take from them, when he speaks peace, none can cause trouble. He is our peace, and hath made our peace with God; and it is he alone that speaketh peace, and creates the fruit of the lips, peace, Isa. lvii 19. He is also our shepherd, therefore (said David) I shall want nothing. Psalm xxiii. 1. He is a fountain opened, a fountain of light, life, love, grace, and truth. He is the head of his body, the church. The husband, the bridegroom, his people are his members, his spouse. He is the 'heir of all things.' Heb. i. 2. In him dwelleth all fulness. He is the 'king of saints the rock of ages.' Yea, he is all and in all. O beloved, had we but faith to act on this blessed Jesus, and on these his most sweet names and gracious attributes, our hearts would not be troubled into what condition soever we were brought. Could we act faith on Jesus

as our head, husband, and father, who is all fullness, all in all, could we doubt of having all seasonable supplies from him? Let our faith but apprehend, apply, and appropriate Jesus as our blessed head, our most dear husband, and then consider in earnest who he is, and what he is: how mighty, how full, loving, pitiful, compassionate, tender hearted, and kind; how ready to help, how engaged to us by many promises, and can we then take up such unworthy thoughts of him, as to think he hath forgotten us? Will he not timely support and supply us? Hath he shed his blood for us, and will he forget us? Are not all his people as dear to him as 'the apple of his eye?' Zech. ii. 8. Surely it is our want, or the weakness of our faith, that causeth all our heart trouble: 'O my poor soul, how comfortably mightest thou live, if thou couldst live by faith? Lord, I believe, help, strengthen my faith.' Could we but apply and appropriate Christ to our souls, and act faith upon those precious names of Christ, which are not as so many empty titles which are sometimes given to men, but they are real representations of that most dear love and tender affection, of that special care, mercy, and loving kindness that is in Jesus toward all his poor children, that they might draw out the same for their strong consolation; and that they might trust in him, and not despond nor be dejected. Thus, if we can believe in Jesus, our hearts shall not be troubled.

Thirdly, Faith acted on the covenant of grace, whereof Christ is the Mediator, and upon all his exceeding great and precious promises, will prevent and cure all heart trouble. Believe in the blessed Mediator of the new covenant, who hath undertaken, not only on God's part, to see that his part be performed to us, but also is become our surety; undertaking for us, and by himself, to fulfil the whole law of God both actively and passively; 'to fulfil all righteousness' for us, and by his Spirit to enable us to fulfil the conditions

of the covenant, working in us faith, love, obedience, and all grace.

In this sense God hath given Christ to be a covenant to us, Isaiah, xlii. 6, and his blood is the blood of the covenant, by which he rescueth poor souls that were prisoners to sin and Satan; out of the pit of destruction, Zech. ix. 11. By this covenant, upon Christ's shedding of his blood as a sacrifice for sin, and his performing all the work of mediation, and upon our receiving of him, and believing in him, as he is offered to us in the gospel, God is pleased to promise to become our God, our reconciled Father, to pardon all our sins, to give us his Spirit, and all grace here, and glory hereafter. Now Christ, our blessed Mediator, hath perfectly fulfilled all that God required for us, and in our room and stead: that is most certain, for he finished the work that his Father gave him to do; and he hath made many sweet promises to us, that he will send the Spirit into our hearts, to work faith in us, to receive him, and to apply the merit of his blood to us, to sanctify, and renew us thereby; and hath promised, that 'whosoever comes unto him, he will in no wise cast out,' Matt. xi. 28. And all that come unto him, shall find rest to their souls. 'That whosoever believeth in him shall be saved; that he will keep them, and none shall pluck them out of his hand. That he will raise them up at the last day,' John, x. 28. Assuring us, that he is gone to heaven, as our 'forerunner, to prepare a place for us there, and that he will come again, and take us to himself, that where he is, we may be also.' Now, if we can but act faith on this Jesus, and on the covenant, whereof he is the Mediator, and on his promises, applying them, and relying on them, our hearts shall not be troubled.

Besides: let us consider, there is not a passage of providence from God to us, but it comes through the hand of this Mediator, 1 Cor. viii. 6. 'All things are by him:' put what you will in the hand of a mediator, and in his power, it must

needs turn to the good of him for whom he is a mediator. Now to support and comfort us in all our troubles, let us consider two things :

1. This Mediator steps in between God's wrath and us, in all our afflictions; that no fury, or effects of it may break forth from God on his people, for whom he is the Mediator, that nothing but fatherly love may be in the chastisement, and if love send the affliction, whatever it be, to try and purge, &c., there can be no hurt in that affliction. Again, our Mediator interposeth, either to hold off the smart, or to allay and mitigate it, that it shall not distract, Daniel, iii. 25, no, nor hurt.

2. He steps in to uphold us, and to strengthen our weakness, enabling us to endure, Phil. iv. 4. 12, 13. It was the Mediator that did strengthen Paul; 'The Lord stood by me, and strengthened me,' said he: Faith acted on this blessed Mediator, eyeing him, and believing that our afflictions come through his hands, even his who loved us, and died for us, our dearest friend, and who hath all power in heaven and earth, must be a mighty support to us in all our troubles.

Fourthly, Let faith be acted on the word of Christ also; ye believe the word of God, believe the word of Christ also; 'his mouth is most sweet;' none but gracious words proceed out of his mouth. 'Grace was poured into his lips,' Psalm xlv. 2, and he poured out grace in all his words; his whole gospel is a gospel of grace, words of peace, and sweet salvation. Hear him speaking most sweetly, Matt. xi. 28, 'Come unto me, all that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' O what sweet words are these! 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters and drink, without money and without price,' Isa. lv. 1, 2. 'I am the way, the truth, and the life,' John, xiv. 6. 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in and sup with him, and he with me,' Rev. iii. 18. This is but a taste of those sweet clus-

ters of most refreshing grapes which hang upon the boughs of the gospel; let us take frequent view of what lies upon record in the evangelists, and often read over the manifold promises of grace that fell from the sweet mouth of our blessed Lord, and meditate, and ponder, and consider of them, and act our faith upon them, and we shall find comfort in them; his words drop as a honeycomb; his words are spirit and life. More particularly,

First, Our faith must be acted upon Christ's word of precept, his word of command in time of trouble: 'Fear not him that can kill the body, but him that can cast both soul and body into hell,' Luke, xii. 4, 32. 'Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer.' 'Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid.' 'Rejoice when men shall persecute you,' &c. Luke, xxi. 19. 'In patience possess ye your souls;' with many such. Now Christians must yield up the obedience of faith to such commands, and urge them upon their hearts, charging themselves to obey them, saying, O my soul, my Lord hath forbidden me to fear, to be troubled, to be thoughtful, to be dejected, &c., he hath commanded me to be patient, yea, to rejoice in my suffering; he is my Lord, and I must obey him, I must keep his commandments, else I cannot love him: I must keep his sayings, or else I cannot be his disciple; if I keep his commandments, he will manifest himself to my soul, his Father will love me, and he will love me, and they both will make their abode with me; for it is his promise, John, xiv. 21. 23. Say thus, O my soul, Jesus Christ is my king and lawgiver, I must obey him; he is my prophet also, 'and I must hear him in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto me.' I have taken him for my Lord as well as for my Saviour; my king to rule me, as well as for my Jesus to save me; for my prophet to teach me, as well as for my priest to satisfy for me; O my soul, consider, 'he is the author of eternal salvation only to those that obey him.' Thus

applying the commands of Christ to ourselves, and urging his authority upon our hearts, it will help us to bear up under our troubles.

2dly. Act faith upon the promises of Christ, of which somewhat was said before. He hath promised to be always with us, to send the Comforter to manifest himself unto us, that he 'will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax,' Matt. xix. 29. That he will give us an hundred-fold for all our losses for his sake. That he will gather us with his arm, carry us in his bosom; that he will hear our prayers, that he will give us a crown, a kingdom, everlasting life, with many more. O, could we act our faith upon these precious promises, and lie sucking by faith, on those full breasts of consolation, and draw by faith prayer, and meditation, from these wells of salvation, we should find sweet support under all our troubles.

3dly, Faith acted on the word of threatening, may put a stop to heart trouble; Jesus Christ hath dreadfully threatened those that love father or mother, son or daughter, more than him, or their own lives; and those that are ashamed of him, or his word, and those that fall from him, and those that hear his sayings, and do them not; and those that are fruitless branches, &c. Matt. x. 37. Luke, xiv. 26. Mark, viii. last. John, xv. 3.

Faith acted on the examples in the word of Christ, especially his own example: 'Learn of me,' saith he, 'I am meek and lowly of heart,' Matt. xi. 29. He was as a 'lamb dumb before the shearers,' 1 Pet. i. 21, and we must follow his steps. We have also a cloud of witnesses, the examples of the primitive Christians, who bore all their troubles with patience and holy courage: and we are expressly commanded to be followers of them 'who through faith and patience inherit the promise,' Heb. vi. 12. Thus faith acted on the word of Christ, will help against all heart trouble.

Fifthly, Faith acted on the work of Christ, will either prevent or cure heart trouble. And that

again, if faith be acted upon the work he hath done for us already, and upon the work he is now doing for us in heaven, and upon the work he is now doing in us on earth, and upon the work he will do for us, and in us, and upon us at the last day. All which works of Christ, if we act our faith on them, we shall not be much troubled in our hearts. Believe also in Christ; 'Believe me,' saith he, for the works' sake,' John, xiv. 11.

1. Faith must be acted upon that great and glorious work of Christ for us when he was upon earth, that work which his Father gave him to do in the days of his flesh, as our Redeemer, and that in doing and in suffering; for he came to do the will of God by his obedience, as well as to suffer it by his satisfaction, and this is his state of humiliation. He assumed human nature, entered the virgin's womb, was born here, 'yet without sin.' He lived on earth a time, doing good, and healing all manner of diseases; spent most of his time in preaching, praying, fasting, and revealing to men the whole will of God for their salvation, and fulfilling all righteousness. He professed 'he came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him,' John, vi. 38, 39. And, saith he, 'this is the Father's will which sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.' A comfortable consideration indeed, and a cure for our heart trouble; that our Lord Jesus will raise up all our dead, dear relations and friends, now rotting in their graves: 'All that died in Jesus, will Jesus bring with him,' 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. And this also is the Father's will, that every one that seeth the Son, that is, every one that by Faith receiveth and believeth in the Son, shall have everlasting life. Now, to accomplish and finish this will of the Father, was the whole work of Christ upon earth, even to draw poor souls unto him, to work faith in them by his word and Spirit, to fulfil the whole law of God for them and in them, Rom. viii. 4, and to begin and finish the whole work of our

redemption. Faith acted on this work of Christ upon earth for us, in the several parts of it, 'he being partaker of flesh and blood with us, to deliver us from him that had the power of death, that is, the devil: and to free us from the fear of death, by which we were always subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. I say, if we can act faith on these works of Christ for us, we shall have no cause of heart trouble.

Let us consider, that our blessed Lord denied himself on earth, and was well pleased not to have his own will, nor to do his own will, but referred himself entirely to his Father's, what reason have we, poor worms, to be troubled when our wills are crossed? Let us in heart and life say, as we pray, 'Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,' Matt. vi. 10. And when the will of God is done upon our families and relations, let not our hearts be troubled, but let us imitate Jesus Christ in our submission to the will of God, making it our work on earth to be doing all the good we can, and so to put him on, and walking as he walked, and not to be troubled.

Secondly, Faith acted on Christ's suffering work on earth, will greatly contribute to our support; 'he was a man of sorrows,' Isa. liii. 1, 2, so that if we meet with sorrows on earth, we do but drink of our Master's own cup, and that should quiet us.

Christ's sufferings on earth were of two kinds, viz. for our imitation, and for satisfaction for our sins.

1. For our imitation. His patient suffering on reproaches, scorns, revilings, contradiction of sinners, temptations, persecutions, bonds, poverty, shame, loss of friends, &c. suffering all with invincible patience and meekness, without the least murmuring, repining, disquiet, or discontent, without any retaliation; for when he was reviled, he reviled not again; he prayed for his enemies, &c. and all this as our 'example, that we should follow his steps,' 1 Pet. ii. 21—23. And if our Lord, the Lord of heaven and earth, suffereth such

things, what reason or cause have we to be troubled in our hearts when we are persecuted, reviled, forsaken of all our friends, impoverished, exposed to shame and sorrow, seeing our blessed Lord was so exposed, and so exercised upon earth? Is it not enough for the servant to be as his master? Shall we think to fare better than him? His sufferings were to teach us to bear ours with Christian patience, and to sanctify ours to us; yea, in all our sufferings he sympathizeth with us.

Let us then act our faith upon Christ's sufferings on earth; his whole life being a life of suffering, he knew what trouble meant, he was acquainted with grief, he knew what it was to lose a friend; for in his greatest trouble, all his disciples (whom he calls his friends) forsook him and fled, 'and being tempted himself, he knows how to succour them that are tempted,' Heb. ii. 18, and iv. 15. He hath a feeling of all our infirmities. Let us labour to act faith on Jesus, and our hearts will not be troubled.

2. But his great suffering work for us, was his work of satisfaction. 'All our sins being laid on him, it pleased the Lord to bruise him, and to put him to grief, and to make his soul an offering for sin: he poured out his soul unto death, was numbered among transgressors,' Isaiah, liii. 6. 10. 12, 'was made sin for us: he bare our sins on his own body on the tree; was made a curse for us,' 2 Cor. v. 20. Gal iii. 19, suffered the wrath of God for us, to deliver us from the wrath to come. O blessed Jesus! when our sins were upon him, he was sore amazed, groaned, was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death; he was in a bloody sweat, in a bitter agony in the garden; he was falsely accused, unjustly condemned, and then barbarously crucified, suffering that cursed and cruel, shameful and painful death of the cross, and all as our surety, and as a sacrifice to God for our sins. 'Christ our passover was sacrificed for us,' 1 Cor. v. 7, to make atonement

and satisfaction to the law and justice of God for us, Rom. iii. 25.

This was the great work of the transcendent love of Jesus Christ when he was upon earth, when he 'travailed in soul, drank of the brook in the way,' Psalm cx. 7, that black torrent of wrath and curses that lay in the way betwixt our souls and heaven, which stopped up our passage thitherward, and made it utterly impassable for us: but Jesus made a passage by his blood, that his redeemed might pass through. So great were his sufferings in this world for us, that they made him cry out, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' 'offering up strong cries with tears,' Matt. xxvii. 46. Heb. v. 7.

Now then, let us act our faith on the sufferings of Christ here on earth, and believe that he suffered all those hard and heavy, those bitter and grievous things for us, and in our names; that he bore our sins to satisfy God's justice for them, to purchase and procure our pardon. O that we could but believe in this Jesus, that he sweated great drops of blood for us, and that he shed his very heart's blood upon the cross for us, and by faith apply and appropriate all this to our own souls, believing that 'he was wounded for our transgressions, smitten for our sins; that the chastisement of our peace was upon him,' Isaiah, liii. that by the blood of his cross he hath made our peace, and hath purchased for us eternal life. Believe this, and then see what little cause you have to have your hearts troubled for any loss or cross whatsoever. The consideration, in a way of believing of what Christ hath done for us, and of what he hath suffered for us, should make us patiently do or suffer any thing for him and from him. 'Believe also in me.'

Secondly, Our faith must be acted upon the work of Christ, which he is now doing for us in heaven. He is not idle there, although 'he be set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:' but he is at work for his people there,

there, 'he maketh continual intercession for us,' Rom. viii. 34. He is there as our advocate to plead our cause, and manage all our business there, presenting his blood in the virtue of it to his Father for our pardon, presenting our persons and services perfumed with the incense of his own righteousness, and by his spirit applying the virtue of all to our souls.' 'He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us,' Heb. vii. 25. Of this I have spoken before. Now if we can act our faith upon the intercession of Christ, who knows all our wants, burdens, cares, and fears, and whose office is to plead and intercede for us in heaven, (though we may scarce have any to plead or speak a word for us on earth, yet) we should have no cause to have our hearts troubled: we have a faithful friend to whom we may commit our cause.

Thirdly, Christ is doing a work in us on earth, while he himself is in heaven; he is humbling us, purging us, teaching us, mortifying our corruptions, crucifying our inordinate affections, sanctifying us, and so preparing us for heaven: he is making us meet for the kingdom; he is fitting us for his Father's house, by all his ordinances, and by all his providences, by every loss and cross; by all our afflictions, as, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'Our light afflictions which are but for a moment work for us (that is, by the way of preparation) a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Jesus Christ is in the word, and in the rod, he is all in all: he is still forming, squaring, fashioning, and working by his spirit, word, and rod, upon his people, to make them more and more conformable to himself, to square them as stones for his building, to make them habitations for himself, temples for the holy God to dwell in, and that he himself may delight to dwell in them here, and to make them fit to dwell with him for ever in glory. Now let us labour to act our faith on those blessed works of Christ in us, and believe that he is

thus working in us, even in and by all our afflictions, and labour to feel and find these gracious works carrying on in us and we shall have no cause to be troubled.

Moreover, our faith should be acted upon the work that Christ is now doing for us in heaven; besides his intercession for us there, he is preparing a place for us in heaven, as he told his disciples, to comfort them; 'In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you.' A place in heaven is infinitely better, and more to be desired than the best place on earth. A place in the Father's house, in the highest heavens, in the glorious paradise above, that is the place of all places, there the great and glorious God dwells, there blessed Jesus dwells: O that 'New Jerusalem, the city of the living God,' that's the place indeed, 'that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. Some think that Jesus went locally into hell, but we are sure he went locally into heaven; and we know for what he went there, for he hath told us, it was to prepare a place for us there. Here below all places are full of darkness, snares, temptations, fears, dangess, persecutions; but that is a place of perfect peace, perfect rest, of light, comfort, joy, and consolation. Here we are pilgrims and strangers, there is our home, our Father's house. Here we have 'no continuing city,' 1 Cor. iv. 11, no abiding place. Christ's people here in this world, many times, have no certain dwelling-place, but are driven from house and home, forced to fly from one city to another, from town to country, from one kingdom to another; constrained to wander from place to place; while others abide in their habitations, they must seek their quarters where they can find them, a while under one friend's roof, a while under another's; which is no small affliction to them that feel it, though others lay it not to heart. Now what should comfort us in this our pilgrimage and wilderness condition; what should support us in

this our wandering and desolate state, but that it was even thus with our blessed Lord himself upon earth, who had 'not a house to put his head in?' And so it was with his disciples, and with many choice saints, as Heb. xi. 37, 38. What should bear up our spirits, but this comfortable consideration, that our Lord went to heaven on purpose to prepare a place for us there? If the earth cast us out, heaven will receive us: if men say to us, Remove, begone hence, depart away, here is no place, no abiding for you; our dear Lord will call to us out of heaven, and say, 'Come up hither,' Revelation, xi. 12. Come up to me, I have prepared a place for you here. There is room enough in our Father's house, there are many mansions and from thence there shall be no removal for ever, no more any changing houses for ever, when once we are lodged in our Father's house. There is our forerunner for us entered, Heb. vi. 20. The hope we have through grace of getting into that blessed place, by that new and living way, to rest there after all our weary wanderings here, and never to remove more, is that which comforts us in these our troublesome removals here: O that place, and that blessed state in that place, 'to see God, and to be ever with the Lord, to see our lovely Lord Jesus as he is, and to be made like unto him.' Could we fix our hearts and eyes more steadfastly upon those invisible and eternal things, we should more quietly and comfortably bear our present troubles, yea, and rejoice in them. And when we can act our faith upon that place and state above, and conclude our title to it, by our interest in Christ, then our hearts will not be troubled.

Also this consideration should preserve us from heart trouble and sorrow for the loss of our dear relations which died in Jesus, for that they are gone home to their Father's house, they are arrived at their harbour, they are safely housed, they are where they would be, they are gone to the place that their beloved Lord went to prepare

for them, 'to that city of God, to the general assembly of the first born, whose names are written in heaven,' &c. Heb. xii. 23. They would not exchange their place now for the most stately and most magnificent place in the whole world. O could we but realize by faith that most happy state and place where our deceased pious friends are gone, our hearts would not be troubled for them.

And this may comfort us also under all our present sufferings and sadnesses, that ere long we also shall go to that place, to that city above, which God hath prepared for us. Our Lord assures us, that 'he will come again, and take us to himself, that where he is, we may be also;' O could we believe this, we should say, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.

Fourthly, Our faith must be acted upon the work that Christ will do for us, and in us, and upon us in heaven at the last. It is above all our understandings to conceive what glorious works Christ will do for us and in us at the last day. 'It does not yet appear what we shall be,' 1 John, iii. 2. There shall be a day of the manifestation of the sons of God. The poor despised saints, all black and cloudy here, covered with shame and reproach now, shall then be manifested to be the Lord's jewels: that will be a day of their full redemption, both of soul and body, their wedding and their solemn coronation day; then their blessed Redeemer shall publicly own them, and bid them welcome to his Father's house, saying, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father,' &c. Matt. xxv. 34. Then will Jesus put the crown of glory, of righteousness, and of life, upon their heads. Then will Jesus 'present them to his Father without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing,' Eph. v. 27. Then will he make their (own) vile bodies (subject now to vile corruptions, to vile diseases, to vile abuses, and to a dissolution at death) like unto his own glorious body; and their souls shall be like to his, to their full satis

faction. Then the poor disciples of Christ shall have a full end put to all their heart troubles, sorrows, fears, and cares. Then their hearts shall rejoice, and their joy no man (nor devil) shall take from them. Sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and they shall enter in, into everlasting rest; and into that unspeakable blessed state which was purchased by the precious blood of Jesus, and by him prepared and possessed in our names and steads. All our dear relations that died in Jesus are already entered, Christ, their dearest Lord, hath wrought this glorious work on their souls already; they are triumphing, singing hallelujahs in the highest heavens: while we are fighting, sighing, and sobbing here below, they are with blessed Jesus above according to his prayer for them, seeing his glory, and participating of it. Thus much for the work of Christ, upon which our faith must act, that our hearts may not be troubled.

Sixthly; Our faith must act upon the will of Christ, in order to the preventing and curing our heart troubles, fears, and sorrows. What is the will of Christ? It is his will that his people's heart should not be troubled nor afraid, as in the text. It is his will, that in the world they should have tribulation, but yet, that they should be of good cheer. It is his will that in their patience they should possess their souls, and not faint nor be discouraged. It is his will they should be sanctified, and that all their afflictions should promote their sanctification. It is his will, that although he love them, yet to rebuke and chasten them: and when he doth so, that they should be zealous and repent. It is his will, that they should deny themselves, and take up their cross daily and follow him. That they should fear none of those things that they should suffer. That they should walk in his steps, hold fast to the end, be faithful unto death. That they should overcome. It is his will, that they should not love father or mother, son or daughter, more than himself; no,

nor their lives, but be willing to part with all for his sake. Yea, it is his will, his last will, that all his poor disciples, after they have suffered a while, may be with him where he is, to behold his glory. Thus if we act faith upon the will of Christ, and labour to yield to it and acquiesce in it, we shall procure much freedom from heart trouble.

Lastly; Our faith must be acted upon the ends and designs of Christ in all his afflictive providences toward us; and these his ends are all very good and gracious. With this argument he himself used to cure the heart trouble of his disciples for his departure from them, viz. that he had good ends in his going away from them; his end was, to prepare a place for them, a better place than any to be found here, a place in heaven, in the Father's house. And his end was to send the Spirit, the Comforter, unto them, which would not come if he did not go away, John, xvi. 6, 7. He had told them of his going away from them, upon which sorrow had filled their hearts; (and it is even so with us, when our earthly comforts leave us, sorrow fills our hearts;) but to cure this, our Lord answers them, that it was expedient for them (good and necessary for them, that he should go away, showing them his end in going away, to wit, that he might send them the Comforter; he would remove from them a great mercy; the greatest earthly mercy that ever they enjoyed, which was his personal presence; they must part with so dear and near, so sweet, so loving, so faithful a friend as himself was to them: and could there be a greater loss? For this sorrow had filled their hearts. But he tells them, it was to make way for a greater mercy, which was, to send them the Comforter, in all the saving and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which they should be able to do greater works than he himself did, John, xiv. 12, which was a greater mercy than his bodily presence with them; and with this he calms and quiets their minds. Now if we can act faith upon the blessed ends

of Christ, in removing our earthly comforts from us, which are, to bestow upon us better mercies, to give us more of his Spirit, and of the graces and comforts of it, our hearts would not be troubled; could we believe, that Christ's end, in all his chastisements, is to prepare us for that place in his Father's house, it would comfort and support us. His ends are very good, and that should quiet us. So long as the people of Christ enjoy most of the comforts of this world, (I speak it by sad experience,) commonly they enjoy least of God, and of his Spirit; and usually when Christ takes away their earthly comforts, then he manifests most of himself, and of his tender love to them: he brings them into the wilderness and then speaks comfortably to them, Hos. ii. 14, then he speaks to their hearts, and not to their ears only, as in time of prosperity; then he gives out most of the graces and comforts of his Spirit. Christ never takes away these outward mercies from his people, but with design to bestow better, if our discontent and unbelief do not hinder. When the Lord took away from his servant David the young child begotten in adultery, it was to give him a Solomon.

Thus I have endeavoured to show what it is also to believe in Christ, that thereby we may prevent and cure our heart trouble.

The last thing I have to do is, to show how faith, acted thus on God and Christ, or on God in Christ, is the best preventive of, and remedy to cure all our heart troubles, which hath indeed been shown, partly in the two former particulars, and will serve for the confirmation of the point also.

Two ways principally, faith acted on God and Christ, doth effect this great cure of heart trouble, and procure heart's ease.

First, By way of application and appropriation.

Secondly, By way of holy confidence and reliance.

First, By applying and appropriating God and Christ to the soul, and all that God is, and all that

Christ is, and all that God hath, and all that Christ hath, and all that God and Christ hath promised: faith applieth and appropriates all this to the soul, faith gives the soul, right, title, claim, propriety, and interest to and in God and Christ; faith makes all the believer's own. Believe, and all is thine. This is the language of faith, my God, my Lord, my Christ, my Saviour, my Redeemer; and this quiets and satisfies the soul fully, or nothing in heaven and earth can do it; when it can thus act its faith on God and Christ. So was David cured of his great troubles, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. He encouraged himself in the Lord his God, his God in Christ; so in that pregnant text, 1 Sam. xxiii. 5. His interest in God's everlasting covenant (whereby God was become his God in Christ) he acted his faith upon, and that satisfied him: so, Mich. vii. 7. Psal. xxxvii 25, 26.

Either God is ours, or he is not; either Christ is ours, or he is not; if God and Christ be not ours, we have cause enough of heart trouble, cause enough to mind our danger, and to be troubled at our very hearts, that we are in such a woful case; and should now, above all things, labour after an interest in God and in Christ; whatever our losses in the world be, this dangerous state of our souls should be most minded, and speedily looked after above all things.

But if God be ours, and if Christ be ours; if we have chosen God for our portion in Christ; and if we have rightly and truly received Jesus Christ the Lord, for our only Lord and Saviour; and have unfeignedly given up our whole selves to him; then may we act our faith upon God, as our God, and upon Jesus Christ as ours, and may claim our right in God and in Christ, and in all that God and Christ is and hath, as our own; and then, what cause of any heart trouble? If God be ours, if Christ be ours, all his ours, life ours, death ours: what if we want relations and friends, honour, wealth and health, is not the all-sufficient God enough? Is not Jesus, in whom dwells all ful-

ness, enough to supply the want of all? This God proposed to Abraham, I am thy God; and to Israel, Isa. xli. 10. Jesus Christ is all and in all; and if Christ be yours, all is yours; God is yours, and the good of both worlds are yours; and what can you desire more?

Secondly, Faith exercised in holy confidence in, and reliance upon God, and Christ, and the promises, will prevent or cure all our heart trouble. David was cured both these ways, Psalm xxxi. 11—15. viz. by appropriating God to himself, and by trusting in him: 'I trusted in thee, O Lord; I said thou art my God,' Psalm xliii. 5, for God is pleased to engage himself to discharge those souls from heart trouble and sinful fear, who trust in him, Psalm xxxvii. 40. Trouble doth disorder the heart, and discompose the mind; but faith in this exercise of it, trusting in the Lord, doth fix and settle the heart; so that then no 'evil tidings shall make such a person afraid, for his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord,' Psalm cxii. 7. God hath promised to 'keep them in perfect peace, whose minds are stayed on him, because they trust in him,' Isa. xxvi. 3, diffidence is the cause of all disquiet; no true rest can be had, nor quiet to our minds, but by confidence in God, Psalm ii. last. O the blessedness of those that trust in Christ! God in Christ is the only fit object of our confidence in all our extremities. A believer hath a God to go to in all his troubles, an almighty and loving Father in Christ; and this should be our comfort, that we are in covenant with him that rules the world, and hath committed the government of all things to his Son, our dear Redeemer, who hath bought us with his blood; and we may be sure that no hurt shall befall us that he can hinder; and what can he hinder, who hath all power in heaven and earth, and that hath the keys of hell and death unto whom we are so near, that he carries our names on his heart, and who will in his due time make all the world know that his people are as dear to him as the apple of his eye.

Trust then, depend and rely upon God in Christ, and by a holy confidence, resign up your will to his will, to do what he would have us do; to be what he would have us be; to suffer what he would have us suffer; and then heart trouble will cease, and sweet peace cometh: when, having trusted all with God, we can in heart say, Lord, if thou wilt have me poor, disgraced, imprisoned, diseased, deprived of my dearest friends, I am content to be so, I trust all my concerns with thee: O the sweet peace and quiet that will be in that soul.

There is the almightiness, the wisdom, goodness, love, mercy, and faithfulness of God in Christ for us to trust in, and rely upon, a bottom and foundation strong enough to build our confidence upon, in all storms and straits: God hath also made many exceeding great and precious promises in his word, and not a naked promise, but he hath entered into covenant with us, founded upon full satisfaction by the blood of Jesus, and confirmed it with an oath, Heb. vi. 17, and to this covenant, sealed by the blood of his Son, he hath added the seals of the sacrament; and all this, that the heirs of the promises, namely, all true believers, might have strong consolation, and be cured of all their heart troubles.

Upon this sure foundation then must our faith act in a holy confidence in God, and in Christ, the soul being taken off from all other objects, carried out of self unto God and Christ; who presently (as soon as trusted in) communicate themselves and their love and goodness to the soul, filling it with peace, strength, and settlement. By this trusting in God we honour God most, and best provide for our own safety.

The way then, whereby faith quieteth the soul and cures it of its troubles, is, by raising it above all disquietments, and pitching it solely upon God in Christ; and thereby uniting it to God in Christ; from whence it draws virtue and strength, to subdue whatever troubleth its peace. For the soul is

made for God, and never finds rest till it return unto, and settle, and centre itself upon him again. And that we may thus place our confidence in God and Christ for all supplies, we must most earnestly beg, cry, and seek to God for grace and strength so to do; we must trust in God alone for all things, and at all times; and thus by appropriating God to us, and Christ to us, and placing our confidence in them, we may be cured of all our heart troubles.

1. *For information. These inferences follow :*

First, If faith acted upon God in Christ be such a remedy against heart trouble; then surely faith is a very precious, a very excellent thing; a grace of very great worth and value, and of great use and efficacy: it is precious faith indeed, the very trial of it is more precious than gold, 1 Pet. i. 7. Precious for its author, the Lord Jesus; for its object, precious Jesus, and all the exceeding great and precious promises, the purchased inheritance: for its offices it unites us to Christ, gives us title to eternal life; it supports under all afflictions, prevents or cures all heart troubles; and precious for its end, which is the salvation of our souls, Eph. iii. 17. Heb. i. 39. 1 Pet. i. 9.

This grace of faith is of a transforming, spiritual nature; and the soul of a believer, by acting it on God and Christ, and on divine, heavenly, and spiritual things, becomes divine, heavenly, and spiritual. Faith unfasteneth the heart from the creature, showing the soul the vanity of it, and carries the soul unto God and Christ, showing it God's all-sufficiency, and Christ's all-fulness; for faith believes what God in his word hath revealed of both. It is the great design of God in all the troubles he sends upon his people, effectually to teach them the exceeding vanity of the creature, to imbitter the things of this world to them, to wean their hearts from them, to bring earthly things out of request with them, to make them see that there is no true contentment, nor solid satisfaction for the soul to be found in them,

and to make them see their true happiness and contentment is to be had, even in God and in Christ alone, for whom their souls were created, redeemed, and sanctified. Now the great work of faith is, to take off the soul from the creature, and fix and settle it upon God and Christ, the true foundation. Naturally our hearts hang loose from God, and cleave to the creature, and when the creature fails, our hearts are troubled; but faith takes off the heart from the creature, and settles it upon God in Christ, where it finds rest; and this is the great service it doth us. All the great and famous things which those worthies did, and all the hard and heavy things they suffered, mentioned in Hebrews, xi, were all done and suffered by the power of faith, verse 37, &c. The settling of our hearts upon God in Christ; trusting all there, is the best means to cure our heart trouble; and thus faith doth, and therefore it is precious.

Secondly, It follows from the promises, that the want of faith in God, and in Christ, is the great cause of all our heart troubles, despondencies, and inquietness. Could we but act our faith strongly on God in Christ, as our God in Christ, our troubles would be prevented or cured: for by faith the soul looks up to God in Christ, through the promises, looking off from all other supports unto God for all supplies, for the removing of all evil felt or feared, and for the obtaining of all good promised and needed; and by this exercise of faith, the soul is raised up above all discouragements and inquietness: but where this faith is wanting, or the lively exercise of it suspended, there the soul sinks under heart troubles. But of this somewhat was said before.

Thirdly, Hence also we may clearly see the absolute necessity of getting faith in God, and in Christ; and of acting it, and living by it; there is no living quietly and comfortably without it, no standing under our burdens, no bearing with patience and cheerfulness our losses and crosses

without this faith; no joy and peace, but by believing; by faith we stand.

Fourthly, Then the things of the world are not to be trusted to, nor trusted in, for comfort in time of trouble. Nothing but God and Christ to be trusted in, and trusted to, and there is enough in them to support and comfort us, as hath been showed: but no confidence to be put in the creature; there is a curse upon such confidence, but a blessing on them that trust in God: no trusting in friends, riches, gifts, or any thing; for so to do is idolatry, to give that to the creature which is due to God alone.

Fifthly, Hence we see the reason why so many faint in the day of adversity, and sink under trouble; and others use unlawful means to prevent trouble, or to get out of it: it is because they want this faith in God and Christ; and for want of it, too many miscarry under affliction.

The second use is, by way of exhortation to all the disciples of Christ, in the word of the text, 'Let not your hearts be troubled, but believe in God, and believe in Christ.' You must get and act faith in God and Christ, this is the only preventive, the only remedy against heart trouble. Our Lord in this text commands it, and commends it: we must needs get faith above all gettings; next to Christ, we must get faith, for we cannot have Christ without faith: go to God or it, it is his work, his gift, yea, it is his operation; yea, the same power that raiseth up Jesus from the dead, must be put forth upon a soul to work faith, Eph. i. 19, 20. The exceeding great and mighty working of the power of God, to raise up the soul to God and Christ, and to enable it to lay hold on God and Christ: for such is our natural proneness to live by sense and carnal reason; and such is the most transcendent excellency of God and Christ, and of divine things which faith looks unto; and so great an inclination we have to self-sufficiency, and so much coted in self-love, and inordinate love of the

creature, and so hard to take off the soul from false bottoms; and because we are such strangers to God naturally: and because there is so much guilt of sin still remaining on us, by our renewed provocations, that we are afraid to entertain serious thoughts of God: and because of that infinite distance between God and us, we can never come to believe in him, and rely upon him, until our hearts be renewed by the power of grace, and this divine grace of faith infused into them: therefore must we go to God and Christ, and put up strong cries and prayers to God to work faith in us, and never give over, until it be wrought in us.

And having got faith, we must act and exercise it upon God in Christ; upon God, I say, He only is the object of faith, and is worthy of it, for a man can be in no condition, in which God is at a loss, and cannot help him. If comforts and means of deliverance be wanting, God can create comforts, and command deliverance, Isaiah, lvii. 19. He can bring light out of darkness, to him all things are possible.

1. Then faith assents to, and is persuaded that there is a God, the infinite, first, and best Being of all things, and who giveth being to all things, Heb. xi. 6.

2. That in this blessed Being are three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and all the object of our faith.

3. Faith must always act on God in Christ, and not otherwise; for in Christ, God reconciles the world. In Christ, God becomes our friend, is at peace with us; by Christ, the enmity between God and us is taken away; in Christ, God becomes our Father, John, i. 12. Gal. iii. 26.

4. Faith is acted by meditation on, considering of, and applying, and appropriating of God in Christ to the soul, laying claim to all that God is, and to all that God hath as its own.

5. It must also act upon the promises of God in his word, and upon God and Christ in them

God hath opened all his heart to us in his word, making many sweet promises, exceeding great and precious promises, 2 Pet. i. 4.; and also, he hath made a covenant of grace with us, to bestow himself and all good things upon us, upon which we must live, until promises end in performances. These promises are our spiritual treasury; promises of pardon of sin, upon repentance and faith: promises of renewing sanctifying grace; promises of the Spirit, of heaven, of eternal life and glory, of mansions in the Father's house, and of all things needful in the way to the kingdom, that we shall want no good thing, and that all things shall work together for our good, &c.

Lastly, That our hearts may not be troubled, but fully satisfied and comforted, we must by faith lay hold on God, take hold of God's strength, which is his mercy in Christ; and most solemnly, most considerately, and most sincerely, take God for our God in Christ, and actually enter into covenant with him: this covenant is founded upon Jesus Christ, his satisfaction and righteousness; and therefore we must also believe in Christ, taking him for our only Lord and Saviour, receiving him by faith as he is offered to us in the gospel, to be all in all to us.

As God offers, so faith receives; God offers himself in Christ, and so faith receives him. God doth, as it were, say in the gospel, O poor lost sinner, come to my son Jesus, take him for the only Lord and Saviour; and by him come to me, and take me for thy God and Father; and by faith the poor believer echoeth back, My Lord and my God, I humbly and heartily come to thee, accept of thee, close with thee; and so by faith the believing soul becomes one with God and Christ; and hereupon the soul by faith cleaves to God and Christ, and unfeignedly, and unreservedly, resigns and gives up its whole self to God in Christ, taking God in Christ for his, and entirely surrenders up itself to be the Lord's. 'My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Now faith, thus acted, will certainly cure all heart troubles.

In order then to obtain solid comfort in all our distresses, let us carefully look whether these acts of faith have really passed upon our souls: have we thus actually, understandingly, and sincerely believed in God, and in Christ? Have we unfeignedly entered into covenant with God in Christ? Can we conclude that God is our God in Christ, by our being his? If we be 'entirely his,' he is ours for certain, 1 John, iv. 19. Cant. ii. 16. If we place all our happiness in him, Psalm lxxiii. 25, if we give him the throne in our hearts, subjecting our whole selves to his government, making God in Christ all our love, our trust, joy, desire, delight, fear, our all, cleaving to him alone, and above all depending upon him as our chief good; contenting ourselves with him as all sufficient for us, resigning up ourselves to his good will, to be, to do, and suffer what he will: if we can and do engage ourselves to sincere obedience, that none of his commandments be grievous to us: if in all things we give Christ the pre-eminence: if we have received the Spirit of Christ, as Rom. viii. 9. Gal. iv. 6, which joins us to him, and makes us 'one spirit with him,' and which is a spirit of adoption, whereby the soul, seeing his interest in God as his Father, can freely go to God in all its straits. If we have the graces of the Spirit, as love, meekness, patience, humility, &c. If we have a resemblance of our Father in us, a likeness of disposition to God and Christ, the image of God, the life of Christ manifest in us: if we do side with God and his cause, in evil times, so that we are willing to part with all things for Christ's sake, and at his call; if it be thus with him in the main bent and constant frame of our hearts, and in the sincerity and integrity of our souls, our consciences in the sight of God bearing us witness that thus it is with us, then may we upon good grounds conclude that God, the all sufficient God, is ours, and Christ Jesus, who is all fulness, is ours, and then our hearts should not be troubled. And to

prevent and cure all our heart trouble, we must act faith on all these things, in God and in Christ, which I mentioned before, and which would be too long to repeat again here; therefore I earnestly desire you to look back and view over those several particular things considerable in God and in Christ, applying and appropriating them to ourselves, and we shall see we have no cause of heart trouble. If the great God be ours, and the Lord Jesus be ours; if we have no husbands, nor wives, nor sons, nor daughters, nor health, nor wealth, we have enough to content and satisfy our souls for ever.

But to draw to a conclusion, that there may be an effectual cure of all our heart trouble, whatever our distress may be, let us labour to act faith on Christ, in considering and believing,

1. 'What he is. 2. Where he is. 3. What he hath declared. 4. What he hath promised:' and all within the confines of this text, ver. 2, 3.

First, Let Christ's disciples labour to believe what Christ is, and who he is. He himself asked his disciples this question, Matt. xvi. 16, 'Whom say ye that I am?' Peter answered, 'Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.' 'I know in whom I have believed,' saith the apostle; and that supported him; and for this knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, he counted all things but dung and dross,' Phil. iii. 9. To believe all things that are written of Christ is not enough; but to believe in him, is by faith to receive him for our only Lord and Saviour, John, i. 12. Col. ii. 6.; and 'actually, unreservedly, unfeignedly, and heartily,' to give up our whole selves unto him, taking him for our absolute Lord, our head, our treasure, and our all; and believing 'he is all that to us that he is.' That he was made sin for us, made wisdom, righteousness, sanctification. and redemption to us. That he is indeed our husband, our head, our high-priest, our surety, our ransom, our redeemer. 'That he hath loved us, and washed us in his blood. That he was delivered up to death

for our offences, and rose again for our justification. That he hath made 'our peace with God by the blood of his cross; and purchased our pardon, and an inheritance for us with the saints in light: and that by believing in him we shall have everlasting life,' John, iii. 16. 36. I say, this is to believe in Christ; and such as thus believe in him have no cause of heart trouble. And thus we must believe in him, and it is the great commandment of God to believe in him, 1 John, iii. 23, and the positive command of Christ himself in the text, 'Believe also in me.' And he that hath this faith, hath Christ, 1 John, v. 10. 12, and hath life, eternal life, John, vi. 47, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you,' (saith Christ, the eternal truth himself,) 'he that believeth in me hath everlasting life.' He hath it *in pretio*, in the price of it, that was punctually paid down upon the cross, therefore called the 'purchased possession;' he hath eternal life in promises, in the promises of it; it is promised to every one that believed; God that cannot lie hath promised it, Tit. i. 1, 2, and he hath it *in primitiis*, in the first fruits of it, the saving graces of the Spirit, which in some measure every true believer hath, 2 Cor. v. 5, Ephes. i. 13, 14.

Now, he that thus believes in Christ, Christ is his; and all that Christ hath done, and suffered, and merited, is his, he hath right and title to it; for by faith he is become the child of God, Gal. iii. 26, 'We are all the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. And if we be Christ's, then are we the heirs of the promise,' Gal. iii. 29, yea, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,' Rom. viii. 17. Yea, then, 'all things are ours,' 1 Cor. iii. 21—23. 'All is ours, if we be Christ's, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas.' All the gifts, graces, labours, prayers of all gospel ministers, all gospel ordinances are ordained and designed for our good, Ephes. iv. 11—13, for the gathering of us in, and for the perfecting, and building of us up in Christ Jesus, until we all come to heaven. The world is ours; the

good and evil of it, the bitter and the sweet of it, the comforts and the crosses of it, the gains and the losses of it, the love and the hate of it, the smiles and the frowns, the friends and foes in it; all is designed for, and shall further promote our spiritual and eternal welfare. Life is ours. All the troubles, sicknesses, pains, evil tidings, persecutions, disappointments, losses of relations, shame, reproach, or whatever attends this mortal life, shall be sanctified and blessed to us for our good. Yea, death is ours, that shall be our advantage, our gain, that shall put a full end and period to all our sin and suffering, and be a door of entrance for us in glory in our Father's house. Or things present, our present fears, sorrows, miseries, infirmities, &c. shall be so ordered and overruled by the wisdom and love of our Father, that they shall all help us onward to heaven. And things to come are ours, all that glory to be revealed, that saint's everlasting rest that is prepared for the people of God, that crown of righteousness, glory, and of life; that kingdom of glory, that unspeakable, that inconceivable state of happiness and blessedness which Christ our Lord hath purchased by his blood, all this is ours also. But how come we to have a right and title to all this? Why, saith the apostle, thus, 'Ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' As sure as Christ is God's, so sure, if you be Christ's, all is yours: and, as I have proved, if we be true believers in Christ, then we are Christ's, we are his members, his spouse, his children; and then, what cause have we to be troubled at any thing, or in any condition? What cause hath such a soul to be dejected, whatever crosses or losses do befall him? Is there not enough in Christ, in the promises, in the purchase of Christ? Is there not enough in heaven, in all that glory, to quiet, content, and fully satisfy our souls? O my beloved, (and oh my base and faithless heart,) it is our base unbelief that doth us all the mischief, that spoils our peace, that hinders our comfort, and makes us walk so heavily. O let us bewail this God-dis-

honouring sin, this peace-destroying sin, and let us, who have received Jesus for our Lord and Saviour, believe that he is ours indeed, and that we are his indeed, and then act our faith upon him, and our hearts shall not be troubled.

Q. But may some say, it is true, if Christ be ours, all is ours, we believe that: but how shall we know that Christ is ours?

A. Briefly thus: If we be Christ's, entirely and sincerely Christ's, then Christ is ours; 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine,' Cant. ii. 16, vi. 3. Her being Christ's, was a sure evidence to her that Christ was hers. Now it is not very hard to know whose we are, whether we be Christ's or our own, Christ's or the world's, Christ's or the devil's: let us take a little pains in trying and searching ourselves, the matter requires it; whose are we? Put this question seriously to our hearts, in the sight of God: Whose am I? Whose image do I bear? by whose spirit am I acted? who hath my heart, my chief love and delight? Have we unfeignedly given up ourselves to Christ? Have we actually entered into covenant with him, taken him for our head and husband; have we passed over and surrendered up our whole selves to Christ, our souls, bodies, all our concerns; have we given up our hearts, heads, tongues, time, talents, estates, liberties, relations, and all to Christ? have we done sincerely? then we have received Christ upon his terms. If we be Christ's and not our own, and live unto Christ, and not to ourselves, Rom. xiv. 9. 1 Cor. vi. 20. Gal. ii. 20, and are content that Christ should dispose of us and ours as he pleaseth; and are always labouring to be more and more like him, and still longing for more and more communion with him, &c., then may we, upon good grounds, conclude that Christ is ours.

Again, if we truly believe in Christ, then he is ours, for it is by faith that we receive him, and are united to him, and made one with him, John, 1. 12, 13, and are by his Spirit and word regene-

rated and made new creatures, and are enabled to walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, 2 Cor. v. 17. Rom. viii. 1, 2. He that believeth hath the witness in himself, 1 John, 5. 10, he need not go far to seek : make sure thy believing in Christ, and thou hast the witness in thyself that he is thine, and that thou art his.

Q. But how shall we know that we have true faith, and that we do truly believe in Christ ?

A. Briefly, thus ; if we have been made sensible of our lost condition by nature, of our misery by sin, of our unbelief : if we have found it a hard work to believe ; if we have been made weary and heavy laden with sin, so as to be truly willing to part with all sin ; if we have been convinced of our absolute need of Christ, and of his incomparable excellency, of his all sufficiency and willingness to save us ; if Christ be most precious to us ? If these convictions have been powerful in us, to drive us from ourselves, and the creature, and sin ; if we have hereupon been persuaded and enabled sincerely to come unto Christ upon his call in the gospel, to accept of him upon his terms, and to receive him, as he is offered to us in the gospel ; if our whole hearts have opened to him, and closed with him, and we have given up our whole selves entirely to him, and taken him for our only Lord and Saviour, as the only way to God, and do most sincerely resign up ourselves to his government, trusting in him alone, and relying upon him for life and righteousness, for grace and glory : then we do believe in him, then have we this true faith ; which is further to be known thus, that it worketh in us true sincere love to him, and to all that is his, his word, his people : your hearts will run out after him, all your affections will centre in him. This true faith draws virtue from Christ to purify the heart, and works sanctification and holiness ; it doth crucify your affections to the world, it works true repentance, and enables you to overcome the world, and to realize the glory of heaven, and to bear us

up under all the troubles in our way thither, as in that lith to the Hebrews, enabling us to trust and betrust ourselves, our souls and bodies, and all our concernments, with Christ : by this faith we walk, by it we live, and hold on, in following the Lamb to the end of our life, Heb. x. 38, &c.

Now certainly he that thus believes in Christ, hath no cause of heart trouble, but quietly submits to the good will of his God and Christ under all the dispensations of his providence, while he is here in this vale of tears, until he come home to his Father's house in peace, where he shall meet his dearest Lord, and a hearty welcome. O this faith, this precious faith in Christ, will conquer all our base fears, moderate all our worldly sorrows, ease our minds perplexed with earthly cares, and quiet our disturbed and distracted thoughts about our outward losses and troubles : by this faith we shall find all our losses made up in God and in Christ. O then labour for it, cry mightily to God for this great gift ; cry to Jesus for it, he is the author and finisher of it ; and labour to act it upon him continually, and your heart shall not be troubled.

I dare affirm, that if any thing bring heart's ease in heart trouble, this will do it. So long as our faith holds up in act and exercise upon Christ, we shall be free from heart trouble ; but when our faith fails, our heart troubles prevail ; as when Moses lifted up his hands, (and his heart too by faith,) Israel prevailed ; but when his hands were down, Amalek prevailed. Faith and heart trouble are like a pair of balances, when one goes up, the other goes down ; faith is the counterpoise of trouble of heart. Believe then in Jesus, act faith on him, and that will prevent or cure heart trouble. Continue in the faith, and your heart troubles will cease ; believe what Christ is, and what he is to us.

Secondly, Let us believe in Christ, and believe where he is. As to his essential presence, he is in heaven, at the Father's right hand, making con-

tinual intercession for us to the Father, Heb. xii. 2, 3. vii. 25. 'He is our advocate with the Father,' 1 John, ii. 1, 2, pleading our cause, presenting all our services, perfumed with his own righteousness, and resenting and feeling our infirmities, sorrows, and sufferings, sympathising with us; in all our afflictions he is afflicted, Isa. lxiii. 9. He knows all our troubles, trials, temptations, sickness, losses, and miseries. Jesus himself knew when he was on earth, what it was to lose a friend; he wept when his friend Lazarus was dead. He is a most tender hearted Saviour, a most merciful high priest; he sees and feels now in heaven all the miseries of his people upon earth, and pleads for them there; believe this, and let not your hearts be troubled.

And as to his spiritual and providential presence, he is always with his people on earth; he is in his people, 'Christ in you the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. He is in his word and ordinances by his Spirit, to bless them to his people. Christ is all, Col. iii. 11, and in all. He is all, that is, instead of all, of father, mother, husband, wife; of son and daughter; instead of health, wealth, liberty, and all to his people; 'in him dwelleth all fulness,' Eph. i. 23, and iii. 17. And he is also in all, he filleth all in all. In all his people, he dwells in their hearts by faith. All our flesh-springs are in him; all the strength, support, and comfort we have, comes from him; he is in all providences, be they never so bitter, so afflictive, never so smarting, so destructive to our earthly comforts, Christ is in them all; his love, his wisdom, his mercy, his pity, and compassion is in them all, every cup is of his preparing; it is Jesus your best friend, O ye poor believers, who most dearly loves you; it is he that died for you, that appoints all those providences, orders them all, overrules, moderates, and sanctifies them all, and will sweeten them all; and in his due time will make them all profitable unto you, that you shall have cause one day to praise and bless his

name for them all. O that we could but believe all this, and could by faith look unto our Jesus in all dark providences, and by faith behold this Jesus managing of them, and believe his love, wisdom, tenderness, and faithfulness in all; in our sicknesses, losses, prisons, restraints, &c., then surely our hearts should not be troubled.

Thirdly, Believe in Christ, believe what he hath told us; 'In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you,' John, xiv. 3. Let us act faith upon these true sweet sayings of our dear Lord, who is truth itself; in my Father's house are many mansions. In my Father's house; my Father's, and your Father's house, one house must hold us all, John, xx. 17, 'I ascend to my Father, and your Father; to my God, and your God;' and it is in that house which is far above all heavens, all visible elementary heavens, the third heaven; that is, the Father's house, 'that house not made with hands, whose builder and maker is God, and is eternal,' 2 Cor. v. 1, 2. This city of the living God, this new Jerusalem; there saith Christ, are many mansions, many dwellings, many fixed, abiding, lasting, everlasting habitations: not tents and tabernacles, such as we live in here on earth, but mansions, abiding places. Is not this a most comfortable consideration to such poor saints as have here on earth no certain dwelling place, not a house of their own wherein to lay their heads, but are forced to remove from place to place, still seeking a habitation, banished from family and friends, from relations and acquaintance: some cast into prisons, (while others dwell safely,) and others exposed to much hardship and danger; I say, this is good news to them, that in their Father's house are many mansions; there are everlasting habitations ready to receive them, made ready for them; from which, when once they are entered, they shall never be cast out more; from whence there shall be no more any

remove for ever. When once their earthly house of this tabernacle is broken down, they shall possess that house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. Let us then by faith often look into the Father's house, and view, and review those many mansions that are there; and let us act hope also, that shortly we shall possess that place and enjoy that blessed state. The believing frequent prospects of that place, will prevent our heart trouble, or cure it.

'If it were not so, I would have told you,' saith our Lord; if there were not such a blessed state, and glorious place for you my disciples in the other world, after all your sufferings in this. I would have told you so: for I have told of the many troubles you must endure in this world; and for your support and comfort, I am now telling you what good things you shall shortly enjoy above in my Father's house; where is all joy, peace, rest, and consolation. There are many mansions, no prisons, chains, nor fetters, but glorious dwellings enough to hold all the saints that ever were, and that ever shall be in the world, where they shall enjoy full and free communion with the blessed Trinity, and with one another; perfect liberty without any restraint: believe this, and let not your hearts be troubled.

I go to prepare a place for you. I have purchased this most glorious place for you, by my blood; I have promised it to you; now I go away to take possession of it for you, in your name and stead: O what a heart comforting, and heart easing consideration should this be to us poor believers, that our Lord went from earth to heaven, on purpose to prepare a place in heaven for us, to possess it in our name and stead; and in the mean time, he is preparing us by his word and spirit, by afflictions and deliverances, for that glorious place! Hence he is called the 'forerunner, who is for us entered into that within the veil,' Heb. vi. 20. So that, as sure as Christ himself ascended, and went into the highest

heavens, so sure shall all his disciples, all true believers, ascend, and enter into heaven also, because he went thither himself, to prepare heaven for them, by taking possession of it in his human nature for us, as our Head and Saviour. 'God hath prepared for them a city,' Heb. xi. Heaven and heavenly glory is said to be prepared: 'a kingdom prepared from the foundation of the world,' Matt. xxv. 34. If we could believe, that Christ hath prepared a place in heaven for us, and that heaven will make amends for all our sufferings in the way thither; and if we would keep the eye of our faith upon that 'recompense of reward, that far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' 1 Cor. iv. 16—18, we should bear up bravely under our sufferings, and not have our hearts troubled.

Let us then look more heavenward, more to our Father's house; let us have our conversations more in heaven, and set our affections more upon things above; upon that blessed state and place above; and know, 'That when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 1—3. Believe this, and be comforted.

Certainly we are too much taken up with, and too solicitous about our earthly tabernacles, these houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, crushed before the moth: we are always minding the diseases, distempers, and dangers of our bodies, those old crazy tottering houses, the prisons of our souls: we mind earthly places too much, but too little those heavenly places in Christ Jesus, Eph. ii. 6, where we shall shortly sit with him. Were we more heavenly minded, we should be more free from heart trouble, and inquietness of mind.

Lastly, To prevent and cure all our heart trouble; let us labour to believe what Christ hath promised here in the text; verse 3, 'I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am,

ye may be also.' Most sweet and comfortable promises!

'I will come again.' So verse 18, 'I will come again; I will not leave you comfortless;' for when I am absent from you, in respect of my bodily presence, 'I will send the Comforter to you, that shall abide with you for ever.' And I myself will come again unto you: you shall not long be without my company. Though Christ seems to withdraw and hide his face from his people, it should be but a little moment, Isa. liv. 7, 8. He will return again and have mercy; yea, 'with everlasting kindness will he return. I will come again;' I will not stay long from you, my heart is still toward you while I am absent, therefore I will come quickly, Rev. iii. 11. I will come to you with my messenger death; though it be the king of terrors in itself, and a grim porter; yet, by my coming with it, it shall be to you the king of comforts; I will come with it, by my Spirit, to strengthen you to look it in the face, to apply to you the virtue of my death, and thereby to take out the sting of it; and I will come to you by my angels, to secure your souls through the region of devils, into my Father's house. If death did come alone to us, it would be terrible to us indeed, its ghastly countenance would affright us; but here is the comfort, that Christ, our dearest Lord, will come with death, to sweeten it to us, and support us under it. This prevented David's fear, Psalm xxiii. 4, 'When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.' O welcome death! when Christ comes with it. This bitter cup, of which we must all drink, is brought to us by the hand of our dearest Lord: this last stroke is given by the hand of love: it is a taking us home to our Father's house: this last enemy hath Christ conquered for us, because his children are 'partakers of flesh and blood, he likewise took part of the same, that through death (that is, his own death) he might destroy him that

had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them, who through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage,' Heb. ii. 14. Jesus knew what death was, he himself had the pangs of death upon him: sin, the sting of death was laid on him; and the law, which is the strength of sin, the curse of the law was upon him; but now for us, who believe in Jesus, the sting and strength of death is taken out, and when we die, we shall die in the Lord, sleep in Jesus; in union and communion with Jesus; we shall fall asleep in the blessed arms of our dear Redeemer. He will come then to keep us company, through the dark entry (death) into the Father's house; his angels shall carry our souls into Abraham's bosom, yea, in the Father's bosom. O that we would make sure of our union with Christ; and then let us believe, that he will come with death, to translate our souls out of these earthly tabernacles, these prison houses, these houses of bondage (wherein our poor souls have been fettered and chained, cloyed and clogged with corruptions and temptations, kept at a distance, and absent from the Lord, and in which they have been groaning for deliverance,) into 'the glorious liberty of the sons of God, in their Father's house, and shall ever be with the Lord,' 1 Thess. iv. 17.

Secondly, I will receive you to myself. O sweet promise. This is all the hope, all the desire, all the longing, thirsting, breathing of poor believers, viz. that Christ would take them to himself. This is the sum of all their prayers and labours, that they may be fitted for Christ, and then that Christ would take them to himself. Well, saith Christ, work and wait a little longer; do, and suffer a little more; act your faith and patience a little longer, and I will come to you, and take you home to myself, where your soul shall be at rest for ever. The saints, while they are here, at home in the body, they are absent from the Lord; they see but in part, darkly, and

know but in part, very imperfectly, and enjoy but a little, a very little, of God and Christ. O how sweet are a few drops, a few glimpses and glances of divine love now to a poor soul; the least cast of Christ's eye, the least beam of his loving kindness, the least intimation of his favour, the least hint of his goodness, how refreshing to a poor believer? But when Christ shall receive them to himself, they shall 'then see him as he is, shall be like him, and shall be satisfied with his likeness,' 1 John, iii. 2, 3. Psalm xvii. 15. Then shall they see him whom their souls love, face to face; and then will Jesus open to them all the treasures of his love and grace, to their everlasting consolation. They shall then be admitted into the glorious presence of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, 'in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore,' Psalm xvi. ult. When the world shall cast them out, and their habitations shall cast them out, and shall know them no more; yea, when their houses of clay shall be broken down and dissolved, and can hold them no longer, then will Jesus, blessed Jesus, receive them to himself. Then shall they be solemnly married to their glorious Bridegroom, the King of heaven's Son, the Prince of the kings of the earth; he will receive them to himself, he will take them for his bride, embrace them in his everlasting arms, and lay them in his blessed bosom for ever and ever. 'I will receive you to myself,' into the nearest union and communion with myself; and therefore be not unwilling to part with your dear relations; be not afraid to be separated from your bodies, your old friends; for when these earthly tabernacles are dissolved, immediately I will receive you to myself, which is best of all. You shall then enjoy the fruits of all my sufferings; death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession, and the fruits of all your own labours, prayers, tears, and sufferings: and shall find that I am faithful in making good all my promises, and that your labour was

not in vain in the Lord: then shall there be no more any distance between you and me for ever. Comfort yourselves, and comfort one another with these words; 'Believe this, and let not your hearts be troubled.'

Thirdly, 'That where I am, ye may be also.' And what more can be desired? Where is Christ, but 'at the right hand of the Majesty on high, far above all principalities and powers, far above all heavens' Heb. xii. 2, there shall you be also. O admirable, astonishing dignity, that blessed Jesus will advance his poor saints unto at that day! This high and wonderful honour shall all his saints have; they shall now receive the kingdom prepared for them, and that crown of glory, of righteousness, and of life, which Christ hath purchased for them, perfectly freed now from all sin and sorrow, and stated in an unchangeable state of happiness and blessedness. What cause have we then to grieve for our dear relations, whom Christ hath taken to himself, and placed in the Father's house, who are now sitting at his right hand in glory, and singing hallelujahs? And could we but firmly believe these promises of our Lord, and act our faith in meditating fixedly on them, and on Jesus in them, applying and appropriating them, and Christ in them, to our own souls, considering and pondering on them, until our hearts be warmed, and our affections stirred and kindled with them, acting also hope, love, joy, desire, delight, hunger, thirst, panting, breathing; pouring out our hearts in prayer to God for his Spirit to bring home these promises to our souls in power, fixing them upon our hearts, and helping us to lay hold on them, and upon Christ in them, and resigning up our whole souls to Christ in them, steadfastly relying on his goodness and faithfulness, and trusting in him; I say, could we but do so, and in the strength of God betrust our whole selves, and all our concerns, thus with Christ, and live in the lively exercise of faith thus on God, and on Christ, we should find this to be heart's ease to us in all

our heart trouble. 'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth in him shall not be confounded,' 1 Pet. ii. 6.

Let all heart trouble cease,
 Let naught disturb your peace
 Who faith in God profess,
 And in his Son no less.
 For in the Father's house
 Are many mansions sweet,
 Christ hath prepared for us,
 When we 're for them made meet.

APPENDIX

Quest. 'It may be demanded, that having heard the excellency and usefulness of this sovereign medicine to cure heart trouble, namely, faith in God and in Christ; can you tell us how we may get this faith? and what means we shall use to obtain it?'

Ansio. I shall endeavour, by the help of God's Spirit, and Scripture-light, to direct you herein, and as briefly as I may.

Direct. I. First, you must be convinced of your unbelief, of the greatness of the sin of unbelief, and of your absolute need of faith. Of these three things you must be fully convinced.

1. Of your unbelief; for most people think they have faith, and that they never were without it, and therefore labour not for it. Pray earnestly therefore that the Holy Spirit may be sent into your hearts to work this conviction in you, for it is his proper work, John, xvi. 8, to convince the world of sin, because they believe not on me, saith our Lord: this is the great sin, the damned sin of the world, their not believing on Christ. Now that we may be convinced, that by nature we have no faith, let us consider these scriptures, Ephes. ii. 1, 2. 12, and that until we are regene-

rate and born again, we have no faith, is evident from John, i. 12, 13, there, believing in Christ. and regeneration, are inseparably joined together; Acts, xv. 9, and xxvi. 18, and 20, 21. From which scriptures it is most evident, that such as are strangers to the heart purifying, the heart-sanctifying work of faith, have no faith: if we have not truly repented, nor know any saving change wrought in us, and upon us, by the Spirit of God; for certain, whatever we think, we have no true saving faith, it is but a fancy: of this then we must be fully convinced, and must most heartily beg the help of the Spirit to convince us.

2. Of the greatness of the sin of unbelief: it binds the guilt of all other sins upon us; it is disobedience and rebellion against the great God: for he commands us to believe, 1 John, iii. 21, and by our unbelief we make God a liar, 1 John, v. 10. O horrible wickedness! And,

3. We must be convinced also of our absolute need of faith; we must needs have it, or we must perish. Without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6; without it we cannot be the children of God, John, i. 12. Gal. iii. 26; without it we can have no pardon of sin, Acts, x. 43. Rom. iii. 25. John, viii. 24. And in what a dangerous case are we, so long as we lie under the guilt of all our sins? Without faith we are not reconciled to God, nor justified, Rom. iii. 22. v. 1. Nor can we be sanctified, Acts, xxvi. 18. 2 Thess. ii. 13. No access to God but by faith, Rom. v. 2. Ephes. ii. 18. No living the life of religion, nor bearing up under affliction, nor holding out to the end without faith, Heb. xi. No salvation, nor eternal life without it, Ephes. ii. 18. John, iii. 16. 36. Heb. x. last. Of all these things we must be convinced, if ever we will have faith.

Direct. II. Secondly, If we would have faith we must diligently search the Scriptures, read the gospel, attend on the reading and preaching of the gospel for this very end, that we may get faith by it: I say for this very end, certainly, that should

be our end, in reading and in hearing the word, which was God's end in publishing of it; now this was his end in publishing of it, John, xx. 21. Rom. xvi. 25, 26., Rom. x. 17. Acts, xiii. 48. Ephes. i. 13. This is the ordinary means appointed by God, to work faith in the souls of men, as appears by Acts ii. 42, and iv. 4, and xi. 20, 21, and many more. There are few that read and hear the word for this end, and therefore get no faith by it.

Now that the word read, and heard, may be effectual to work this precious, this most necessary grace of faith in us, there are some things antecedent, some concomitant, and some consequent upon our attendance on the word, and our use of it.

First: Some things, antecedent, are necessary.

(1.) Preparation; for want of this the word most times proves ineffectual. It is the empty, hungry soul that relisheth and taketh in this food, James, i. 21. 1 Pet. ii. 1. Matt. xiii. 22, usually our success is according to our preparation; as in prayer, Psalm x. 17, compare 2 Chronicles, xii. 14, with 2 Chron. xix. 3, make conscience then of preparation.

(2.) Prayer: pour out your hearts to God in prayer for a blessing on the word that you read or hear. O, lift up a cry to God, and say, Lord, make this word effectual to work faith in my soul, &c.

(3.) Earnest desire and expectation of meeting God in the word, and of his blessing on it: if we expect nothing from it, no wonder if we receive nothing: there is 'a fulness of blessing in the gospel,' Rom. xv. 29. We should bring hungry and thirsty souls after God, the living God, as Psalm lxi. 1—3, and lxxxiv. 1, 2. God 'fillethe the hungry with good things,' Luke, i. 53.

Secondly, Some things are concomitant. As,

(1.) We must read and hear it 'as the word of God, and not as the word of man,' 1 Thess. ii. 33. Acts, x. 33, and we must acknowledge God's authority in it.

(2.) Receive it with meekness, opening our

hearts to it, and give it the most tender entertainment, James, i. 21.

(3.) With love, readiness of mind, and gladness of heart, 2 Thess. ii. 10. Acts, ii. 41.

(4.) With faith, giving credit to it, believing it to be the word of God, Heb. iv. 2.

(5.) We must be careful to remember it; see what great stress is laid upon our remembering, 1 Cor. xv. 2. Our salvation lies upon it, Psalm cxix. 11. Love the word, for love is the act of memory.

(6.) Prayer must be added again for a blessing.

Thirdly : Some things must be done afterward also, As,

(1.) Meditation upon what you have heard and read; for want of this, usually, all is lost. I am persuaded, this is one great reason why most profit so little by the word, because they make no conscience of meditation; they hear and read, but never think more on it afterward; so preaching, hearing, reading, and all lost; and souls and heaven and all lost. For God's sake then, whose word you read and hear, and for your own soul's sake, if you are not willing they should perish for want of faith, make conscience of meditation on the word, Psalm i. 2. cxix. 97, if ever you get good by the word, meditate upon it.

(2.) Application of it; take it home to yourselves, Job, v. 27. Let it sink down into your hearts, saith Christ; it must be an ingrafted word, you must receive it into your hearts, and not into your heads only, 2 Cor. iv. 6, your hearts must be jointed to it, and mixed with it.

(3.) Practice; yielding up ourselves to the government of it, making it the standard and rule of your whole conversation. 'We must be doers of the word, and not hearers only, lest we deceive our own souls,' James, i. 22. 1 Pet. i. 22. Matt. vii. 22, 24. And in observing these Scripture rules here laid down, in the careful and conscientious use of God's word after this manner, you may not doubt but the Holy Spirit of God will work with

the word of God, to make it effectual to work this most precious grace of faith in us, whereby to believe in God and in Christ, to the consolation and eternal salvation of our souls: but if we neglect the means God hath ordained to get faith, and for want of it die in our sins, and perish eternally, our destruction will be of our selves.

Direct. III. Thirdly, Would we have faith? Let us engage our whole souls in the deep and serious consideration of the infinite, unspeakable, inconceivable love of God the Father, in this, the highest and fullest demonstration of it, in giving his Son, his only begotten Son, to be a sin-offering, a sacrifice, a ransom for poor sinners, and that for this very end and purpose, that we poor sinners might believe in him, and by believing, might not perish, but might have eternal life. I pray read and ponder upon the following text, and let your most serious thoughts fix on them, and meditate on them; Isa. liii. throughout; John iii. 16, 17. Rom. iii. 25. Rom. v. 8 10. Prov. viii. 30. Col. i. 12, 13. 2 Cor. v. 19-21. Rom. viii. 3. 32, with many other: which for brevity sake I cannot transcribe. If we can but believe this wonderful love of God the Father, in giving his dear Son to be a surety, a sin-offering, to lay all our iniquities on him; that he was pleased to bruise him, and put him to grief for us; and consider and meditate upon the height and depth, the breadth and length of this immense, incomprehensible love of God, in giving his Son, and that on purpose that we might believe in him, and by believing might have eternal life; I say, it will greatly help us to believe in his Son, to accept of this unspeakable gift, and to receive him as he is offered to us in the gospel.

Moreover, let us also consider of, and deeply meditate upon, the transcendent love of the Son of God himself; who, though he were the delight of his Father, and lay in the bosom of his Father, even then his delights were with the sons of men, then was his heart full of love to poor sinners; and his love brought him down

from heaven to earth, to assume human nature, to take upon him all the sins of his people, to bear them on his soul and body in the garden, there sweating great drops of blood, and on the cross, there pouring out his heart's blood, made a curse, endured the full measure of the wrath of God due for sin, and become the ransom of souls, Phil. ii. 6—8. Luke, xxii. 44. Gal. ii. 20. He loved us, and gave himself for us: 'Loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood,' Rev. i. 6. 1 Pet. i. 18. ii. 24. Gal. iii. 13. Tit. ii. 14.

But while I am writing these things I cannot but conceive an indignation against myself, and heartily wish I were filled with shame, sorrow, and grief of spirit, that having read and heard so often of the surpassing love of God the Father, in giving his son; and so often of the unspeakable love of Jesus, and to be no more affected with it, no more sensible of it, to have my affections no more stirred and moved, no more quickened and warmed; alas, my dead heart, my adamant heart! Lord, sprinkle it with thy blood; Lord, shed abroad that love of thine upon my heart abundantly by the Holy Ghost: Lord Jesus, manifest thy love to me, that I may love thee. I am ashamed and pained for want of love to God, to Jesus; O that I could believe thy love to my soul, then I should not choose but love thee. Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. The consideration of this love of God, and of Christ, is a means to work faith; try it, I pray you, you will find it so.

Direct. IV. Fourthly, Improve and act the historical faith you have, on the doctrines, promises, and threatenings in the gospel, which you profess you do believe. Act the faith you have on the doctrines of the gospel, the promises of rest for your souls, pardon for your sins, life and righteousness, grace and glory, made to those that believe in Christ, and to none else. Believe and think what heaven is, that state of infinite blessedness, in the seeing and enjoying the blessed

God to all eternity; believe what eternal life is, eternal glory; and believe also what hell is, separation from God; 'go, ye cursed, into everlasting fire;' lakes of fire and brimstone, everlasting death, the wrath of God, damnation. And seeing you profess that you believe all this, then believe also and consider it well, that neither is heaven's infinite happiness to be attained, nor hell's unspeakable misery to be avoided, but only by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, John, iii. 16, 17. 36. viii. 24.

Direct. V. Fifthly, Would you have faith? then seek it diligently; pray, O pray for it as for your lives, cry mightily to God for it; pour out your hearts to God in prayer for it; pray continually for faith, pray without ceasing, be importunate with God for it, go all day and night panting and breathing after it, O that God would give me faith! Go to Jesus also for it, cry to him, for he is the author as well as the object of it, Heb. xii. 1, 2. It is the gift of God, O pray for it.

Direct. VI. Lastly, Consider seriously, and often, how wonderful willing God is that you should believe in Christ, as you have heard; and how much he is displeased with those that will not believe in him; and how dreadfully he hath threatened them, as Rev. xxi. 8. Also consider how exceeding willing Jesus Christ himself is that poor sinners should come to him, and believe in him; how sweetly he calls them, how freely he offers himself, and all he is, to them, be they never so bad, never so vile and wicked: 'Ho, every one that thirsteth,' Isaiah, lv. 1, they that have no worthiness in them, nothing but sin and misery, John, vi. 37, and viii. 37. Rev. iii. 16, and xxi. 11. O set your hearts to the consideration of the incomparable unparalleled love of Jesus, in dying that cursed death of the cross for sinners. Consider and meditate, hold your hearts to it, until your hearts be affected with his love, his love that passeth the love of women,

love passing understanding: and consider how well he deserves, and how much he challengeth your love. Consider once again, what a most lovely person Jesus is, who is altogether lovely, the 'brightness of his Father's glory, in whom dwells all fulness, Heb. i. 3, and in whom is all power in heaven and earth, Matt. xxviii. 18, and labour to affect your hearts with his most admirable excellences, and then come unto him weary and heavy laden with your sins, willing to part with them all, give up your whole selves to him, give him your whole hearts, and take him for your head and husband, for your only Lord and Saviour; enter actually into covenant with him, to become his, and his alone, and his for ever. Thus work out your salvation and your consolation, by believing in Jesus, in blessed, all sufficient Jesus, trusting to him, be trusting all with him, and God will work in you 'both to will and to do,' Phil. ii. 12, 13. Use these means in the strength of God, and doubt not, but in the use of them, you shall obtain this precious faith; which having and acting, you shall find it to be your heart's ease in all your heart trouble.

THE
WORLD TO COME,
OR
VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL.

INTRODUCTION

WHEN wicked and profligate persons have gone on in a course of sin to that degree that they can scarce hope for pardon, and find they have reason to fear the just judgments of God for their sins, they begin, at first, to wish that there was no God to punish them, which they think their interest; and so, by degrees, come to persuade themselves that there is none; and then they set themselves to study for arguments to back their opinion, and prove what they are willing to believe. It was with one of this sort of brutes (for they are scarce worthy the name of men) that I had the unhappiness to be acquainted; who would be continually inculcating me, 'that there was neither God nor devil, heaven nor hell, and that those things were only the politic inventions of such as were willing to keep the world in awe; just (says he) as we talk of bugbears, to affrighten children.' It was not without horror and trembling that I first heard this discourse, and therefore I usually left him when he began upon these topics; but his speaking of them to me so often, at last prevailed with me to consider what grounds he had for what he said; and from this time I found my

mind perplexed with so much trouble and darkness that I could hardly bear up under it, for I knew not how to make out, to my own satisfaction, those truths which before appeared to me self-evident. I could not think there was no God but with the greatest horror; yet I called in question the truth of his being. I would not have parted with my hopes of heaven to have been made heir of all the world; and yet I questioned whether there was any such place or state, and I began to doubt whether there was any hell; and yet, at the same time, thought I found the flames of it flashing in my face. Thus was my mind distracted with apparent contradictions; and I found I was involved in a labyrinth of confusion, out of which I had no clue to extricate myself. In this perplexed condition I went to my false friend, to see what comfort he would administer to me; (which was like Saul's going to the witch of Endor, when God had forsaken him;) but what he said did more confound than satisfy me. He indeed laughed at my fears, pretended to pity my weakness, and seemed to hug himself in the freedom and liberty which he enjoyed. He told me he was never molested in the prosecution of what he had to do, by the frightful mormoes of a future state, or an after reckoning; that nature was the great mistress of the universe, and that therefore he followed her dictates; and that all the care he took, was to live here, that when his dust should be next impregnated, it might be into some delightful species of beings: which would likewise, in a great measure, be owing to the place of his burial; for if he were buried in a church, or laid up in a vault, it was possible his dust might be turned into spiders, toads, or serpents; and therefore he designed to be buried in a field or garden, if he could, that there his ashes might spring up in curious and delightful flowers, which was the utmost happiness he could propose to himself; and should be very well satisfied to find all those spirits and powers he was now possessed of exerted in

the variegated beauties of nature: and further he affirmed, that for aught he knew, in the various metempsychosis of nature, he might, some ages hence, again impregnate a human body, as he believed he had done many ages past.

I then urged the Scriptures against all this unintelligible system; but he exploded that, as being only the engine by which politic men brought about their designs; and that to prove a Deity by the Scriptures, was the same thing as to prove the divine original of the Scriptures by the being of a Deity, which was 'idem per idem.'

These discourses of his putting me still on farther doubts, I became so uneasy that my life was a burden to me: I dreaded to be left to the belief of these cursed notions, and yet they continually ran in my mind; I wished a thousand times I had never heard them, and yet they were ever before me: What, said I to myself, are all my hopes of heaven nothing but a vain chimera? have I served God for nothing? or rather, have I fancied one, when there is no such being? It is impossible to tell the agonies I felt upon my giving way to such thoughts as these, which still, with greater force, assaulted me, until I was hurried to the utmost pitch of desperation: Why should I linger thus, thought I, between despair and hope? Is it not better, said I to myself, to put a period to this wretched life, and to try the truth of things?

Upon this, I took a resolution to destroy myself; and in order thereunto, went out one morning to an adjacent wood, where I intended to act this bloody tragedy, which, as I was about to perpetrate, methought I heard a secret whisper, saying, 'O Epenetus, plunge not thyself in everlasting misery to gratify thy soul's worst enemy: that fatal stroke thou art about to give seals up thine own damnation; for if there be a God, as sure there is, how can you hope for mercy from him, when you thus wilfully destroy his image?' From whence this secret whisper came I know not, but do believe it was from God; for I am sure it came with so much

power it made me fling away the instrument with which I had designed to offer violence to my own life, and showed me in a moment the wickedness thereof. The horror of this barbarous intention set all my joints a-trembling, that I could hardly stand; and then the fatal precipice of my destruction was represented to me in that frightful view, that I could not but acknowledge my deliverance to be the work of some invisible and spiritual Power, that came so seasonably to my rescue, and gratitude obliged me to return him thanks; so I kneeled down upon the ground, and said,

‘O thou invisible, eternal Power! which, though unseen by man, beholdest all his actions, and who hast now withheld me from the defacing thy image, I give thee humble thanks: yes, O thou Sovereign Being of all beings, I give thee thanks that I am still alive, and able to acknowledge there is such a Being: O do not hide thyself from my beholding, in such thick clouds of darkness, but let the Sun of glory shine upon me, and chase away the blackness of my benighted soul, that I may never more question thy being or omnipotence, which I have had this moment so great experience of.’

Then rising from my knees, I went and sat me down upon a bank, my mind being greatly taken up with the adoring thoughts of that Eternal Goodness that had so eminently saved me from the dreadful gulf of everlasting ruin, when I was just going to plunge myself into it. And now methought I could not but admire that I should be so sottish to call in question the being of a Deity, which every creature was witness of, and which a man’s own conscience, more than a thousand witnesses, could not but dictate to him.

Now, whilst my thoughts were taken up with these meditations, as I sat upon the bank, I was suddenly surrounded with a glorious light, the exceeding brightness whereof was such as I had never seen any thing like it before. This both surprised and amazed me; and whilst I was wondering from whence it came, I saw coming toward

me a glorious appearance, representing the person of a man, but circled round about with lucid beams of inexpressible light or glory, which streamed from him all the way he came; his countenance was very awful, and yet mixed with such an air of sweetness as rendered it extremely pleasing, and gave me some secret hopes he came not to me as an enemy; and yet I knew not how to bear his bright appearance; and endeavouring to stand upon my feet, I soon found I had no more strength in me, and so fell flat down upon my face; but by the kind assistance of his arm, I was soon set upon my feet again, and new strength was put into me; which I soon perceiving, addressed myself to the bright form before me, saying, 'O my shining Deliverer, who hast invigorated my feeble body, and restored me to new life, how shall I acknowledge my thankfulness, and in what manner shall I adore thee?'

To which he replied, both with an air of majesty and mildness, 'Pay thy adorations to the Author of thy being, and not to me, who am thy fellow-creature; and am sent by him whose very being thou hast so lately denied, to stop thee from falling into that eternal ruin whereunto thou wert going to precipitate thyself.'

This touched my heart with such a sense of my own unworthiness, that my soul even melted within me, and I could not forbear crying out. 'O how utterly unworthy am I of all this grace and mercy!'

To which the heavenly messenger replied, 'The Divine Majesty does not consult, in showing mercy, thy unworthiness, but his own unbounded goodness and incomprehensible love: he saw with how much malice the grand enemy of souls desired thy ruin, and let him go on with hopes of overcoming thee, but still upheld thee by his secret power; through which, when Satan thought himself most sure, the snare is broken, and thou art escaped.' These words made me break forth in this ecstatic rapture

O who the depths of this great love can tell,
To save a tempted sinking soul from hell ;
O glory, glory, to my Saviour's name,
I'll now through all eternity proclaim !
Who, when I on the brink of ruin lay,
Sav'd me from him who would my soul betray .
And now I know, though I no God would own,
The Lord is God, yea He is God alone !

‘Well,’ said this heavenly vision, with a pleasing countenance, ‘that you may never doubt any more of the reality of eternal things, the end of my coming to you is to convince you of the truth of them ; not by faith only, but by sight also : for I will show you such things as were never yet beheld by mortal eye ; and to that end your eyes shall be strengthened, and made fitting to behold immaterial objects.’

At these surprising words of the angel I was much astonished, and doubted how I should be able to bear it, and said to him,

‘O my Lord ! who is sufficient to bear such a sight ?’

To which he replied, ‘The joy of the Lord shall be your strength.’ And when he said thus, he took hold of me, and said, ‘Fear not, for I am sent to show thee things thou hast not seen :’ and before I was aware, I found myself far above the earth, which seemed to me a very small and inconsiderable point in comparison of that region of light into which I was translated.

Then I said to my bright conductor, ‘O let it not offend my Lord, if I ask a question or two of thee.’

To which he answered, ‘Speak on : it is my work to inform thee of such things which thou shalt inquire of me ; for I am a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister to thee, and to those that shall be heirs of salvation.’

I then said, ‘I would fain be informed what that dark spot, so far below me, is, which grew less and less, as I was mounted higher and higher,

and appears much darker since I came into this region of light.'

'That little spot,' answered my conductor, 'that now looks so dark and contemptible, is that world of which you were so lately an inhabitant: here you may see how little all that world appears, for a small part of which so many do unweariedly labour, and lay out all their strength and time to purchase it. This is that spot of earth that to obtain one small part whereof so many men have run the hazard of losing their precious and immortal souls: so precious, that the Prince of Peace has told us, "That though one man could gain the whole, it could not countervail so great a loss." And the great reason of their folly is, because they do not look to things above: for, as you will observe, as you ascended nearer to this region, the world appeared still less, and more contemptible; and so it will do to all who can, by faith, once get their hearts above it. For, could the sons of men below but see the world just as it is, they would not covet it as they now do; but they, alas! are in a state of darkness; and, which is worse, they love to walk therein, and will not bring themselves unto the light, because their deeds are evil.'

I asked him further: 'What were those multitudes of black and horrid forms, that hover in the air above the world, which I indeed should have been much afraid of, but that I saw, as you passed by, they fled; perhaps as not being able to abide that brightness with which you are arrayed?'

To this he answered me, 'They were the fallen and apostate spirits, which, for their pride and their rebellion, were cast down from heaven, and wander in the air, by the decree of the Almighty, being bound in chains of darkness, and kept unto the judgment of the great day. And from thence they are permitted to descend into the world, both for the trial of the elect, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And though you now see they have black and horrid forms, yet were

they once the sons of light, and were arrayed in robes of glorious brightness, like what you see me wear. The loss of which, though it was the effect of their own wilful sin, fills them with rage and malice against the ever blessed God, whose power and majesty they fear and hate; but having lost their innocence and glory, they fly those spirits that have kept their station, and still continue their obedience to their great Creator; in which they are confirmed by the blessed Son of God.'

'But, tell me,' said I, 'O my happy conductor, have they no hopes of being reconciled to God again, after some term of time, or at least some of them?'

'No, not at all,' said he; 'they are lost for ever: they were the first that sinned, and had no tempter, and they were all at once cast down from heaven. Besides, the Son of God, the blessed Messiah, by whom alone salvation can be had, took not upon him the angelic nature, but left the apostate angels all to perish, and only took upon himself the seed of Abraham. And for this reason they have so much malice against the sons of men, whom it is a torment to them to see made heirs of heaven, whilst they are doomed to hell.'

By this time we were got above the sun, whose vast and glorious body, above a hundred times far greater than the earth, moved round the great expanse, wherein it was placed, with such a mighty swiftness, that to relate it would appear incredible. But my conductor told me, this mighty immense hanging globe of fire was one of the great works of God, and of so swift a motion, it moved above a hundred thousand miles in that small space of time we call an hour. And yet it always keeps its constant course, and never has the least irregularity in its diurnal, or its annual motion; and so exceeding glorious in its body, that had not my visive faculty been greatly strengthened, I could not have beheld it: nor were those mighty globes of fire, we call the fixed stars, less

wonderful; whose vast and extreme height, ten thousand leagues at least above the sun, makes them appear like candles in our sight, though every one of them exceeds in magnitude the body of the earth: and should but one of these vast bodies fall, it would burn the world to cinders in a moment; and yet they hang within these spheres without any support, in a pure sea of ether, so thin, and of so great tenuity, that nothing but his word that first created them could keep them in their station.

‘These words are enough,’ said I to my conductor, ‘to convince any one of the great power of their much more adorable Creator, and of the blackness of that infidelity which can call in question the being of a Deity, who has given the whole world so many bright evidences of his power and glory, that were not men like beasts, still looking downward, they could not but acknowledge his great power and wisdom.’

‘You speak what is true,’ replied he, “but you shall see far greater things than these: these are all but the scaffolds and outworks to that glorious building wherein the blessed above inhabit; ‘that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens:’ a view of which (as far as you are capable to comprehend it) shall now be given you.’

VISIONS OF HEAVEN.

WHAT I had been told by my conductor, I found good in a few moments; for I was presently translated into the glorious mansions of the blessed; and saw such things as it is impossible to represent, and heard that ravishing melodious harmony that I can never utter: well, therefore, might the beloved apostle St. John tell us in his epistle, ‘Now are we the sons of God; and it does not yet appear what we shall be?’ Whoever has not seen that glory, can speak but very imperfectly of

it; and they that have, cannot tell the thousandth part of what it is. And therefore, the great apostle of the Gentiles, who tells us he had been caught up into Paradise, where he had heard unspeakable words, which are not possible for a man to utter, gives us no other account of it, but that 'Eye has not seen, nor ear has not heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has laid up for those that love him.' I will give you the best account I can of what I saw and heard of the discourses I had with some of the blessed, as near as I can remember.

When I was first brought near this glorious palace, I saw innumerable hosts of bright attendants, who welcomed me into that blissful seat of happiness, having in all their countenances an air of perfect joy, and of the highest satisfaction. And there I saw that perfect and unapproachable light, that assimilates all things into its own nature; for even the souls of the glorified saints are transparent and diaphanous. Neither are they enlightened by the sun, or any created luminaries; but all that light, that flows with so much transparent brightness throughout those heavenly mansions, is nothing else but emanations of the divine glory, in comparison of which the light of the sun is but darkness; and all the lustre of the most sparkling diamonds, the fire of carbuncles, sapphires, and rubies, and the orient brightness of the richest pearls, are but dead coals in comparison to its glory; and therefore called 'The throne of the glory of God,' wherein the radiant lustre of the Divine Majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner.

The ineffable Deity, exalted on the high throne of his glory, receiving the adorations of myriads of angels and saints, singing forth eternal hallelujahs and praises to him, was too bright an object for mortality to view. Well may he, therefore, be called 'The God of glory,' for by his glorious presence he makes heaven what it is; there being rivers of pleasures perpetually springing

from the Divine presence, and conciliating cheerfulness, joy, and splendour, to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven, the place of his happy residence, and seat of his eternal empire; wherein the Divine Majesty diffuses the richest beams of his goodness and glory, and in which his chosen saints and servants see and praise his for ever adorable excellences.

For my own part, my visive faculty was so far too weak to bear the least translucid ray shot from that everlasting spring of light and glory which sat upon the throne, that I was forced to cry to my conductor, 'The sight of so much glory is too great for frail mortality to bear; yet it is so refreshing and delightful, that I fain would behold it, though I die.'

'No, no,' said my conductor, 'death enters not within this blessed place: here life and immortality reside; nor sin nor sorrow here have aught to do: for it is the glory of this happy place to be for ever freed from all that is evil; and without that exemption, our blessedness even here would be imperfect. But come along with me, and I will bring thee to one that is in the body, as thou art; with him converse awhile, till I despatch another ministration, and then I will reconduct thee back again.'

'O rather,' said I, with some eagerness, 'let me stay here; for here is no need of building tabernacles; the heavenly mansions are here ready fitted.'

To which my shining messenger replied, 'Here in a while thou shalt be fixed for ever; but the divine will first must be obeyed.'

Swift as thought he presently conveyed me through thousands of those bright and winged spirits, and then presented me to that illustrious saint, the great Elijah, who tabernacled in the world below so many thousand ages past and gone; and yet methought I knew him at first sight as well as if we had been contemporaries.

'Here's one,' said my conductor to Elijah, 'who

by the commission from the Imperial throne has been permitted to survey these realms of light: and I have brought him hither, to learn from thee wherein its glory and its happiness consists.'

'That,' says the prophet, 'I shall gladly do; for it is our meat and drink in these blessed regions to do the will of God and the Lamb, to sing his praises, and serve him with the humblest adoration, saying, Blessing and honour, and glory and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne; and to the Lamb for ever and ever: for he has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, and made us unto God kings and priests: Even so, Amen. And I likewise added my Amen to that of the holy prophet.

The prophet then inquired of me, on what account this great permission and privilege was given to me? (By which I understand the saints in Heaven are ignorant of what is done on earth: how then can prayers be directed to them?)

I then rehearsed what I have here set down by way of introduction: at which the holy prophet broke forth into this exclamation.

'Glory for ever be ascribed to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for his unbounded goodness, and great condescension, to the weakness of a poor doubting sinner.—After which he said, 'Now give attention to what I shall speak.' And then he thus began.

'What you have seen and heard already, I am sure you never can relate so as to make it understood: for it is beyond what eye hath seen, ear hath heard, or what the heart of man is able to conceive; I mean those not yet translated to this glorious state, nor freed from their gross elementary bodies: nor is my being in the body here any objection to what I now assert; for though it has not been subject to the common lot of mortals, death, yet it has suffered such a change as has been in some sense equivalent thereto; for it is made both spiritual and impassable, and is now

no more capable of any further suffering than those blessed angels are that compass round the throne: and yet in this consummate state of happiness I cannot utter all that I enjoy; nor do I know what shall be yet enjoyed, for he our happiness is always new.'

I then requested of the blessed prophet a little to explain himself, because I understood not how happiness could be consummate, and yet admit of new additions; for, in the world below, we generally think that what is consummate is completely finished. 'I humbly hope,' said I, 'what I shall say may not be taken as the effect of a vain curiosity, but that my understanding may be cultivated, which yet retains but dark ideas of these heavenly things.'

'To satisfy your doubting soul, and to confirm your wavering faith, is the chief reason of your being brought hither, through the permission of the great Three-One; and therefore I would have you still, as any doubt arises in your breast, to make it known. But as to that which you object that happiness cannot be consummate, and yet admit of new additions, I must tell you, that when the soul and body are both happy, as mine now are, I count it a state of consummate happiness: for through all the innumerable ages of eternity it is the soul and body, joined together in the blessed resurrection state, that shall be the continued subject of this happiness. But in respect of the blessed object of it, which is the ever adorable and blessed God, in whose beatifical vision this happiness consists, it is for ever new: for the divine perfections being infinite, nothing less than eternity can be sufficient to display their glory, which makes our happiness eternally admit of new additions; and by a necessary consequence, our knowledge of it shall be eternally progressive too.

'And therefore it was not without reason that the great apostle of the Gentiles, who, in the days of his mortality, was once admitted hither as you

are, affirmed, "Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive, what God hath prepared for them that love him." And yet the eye hath seen many admirable things in nature; it hath seen mountains of crystal, and rocks of diamonds; it has seen mines of gold, and coasts of pearl, and spiey islands; and yet the eye, that hath seen so many wonders in the world below, could never pry into the glories of this triumphant state. And though the ear of man hath heard many delightful and harmonious sounds, even all that art and nature could supply him with, yet has he never heard the heavenly melody which here both saints and angels make before the throne. And as the eye has not seen, nor ear heard, so neither can the heart of man conceive them; and yet the heart of man (the chiefest work of the all-wise Creator in that microcosm) is of so fine and curious a composure, that it can almost conceive any thing that either is, or was, or ever shall be, in the world below; yea, what shall never be. Man can conceive that every stone on earth shall be turned into the most orient pearls, and every blade of grass into the brightest and most shining jewels; he can conceive, that every particle of dust shall be turned into silver, and the whole earth into a mass of pure refined gold: he can conceive the air to be turned into a crystal, and every star advanced into a sun; and every sun a thousand times more large and glorious than what he now beholds it; and yet this is infinitely short of what the high eternal Majesty, who is incomprehensible in all his works of wonders, hath here prepared for all his faithful followers.

'But that you may retain,' added the Prophet, 'the best idea of our happiness, I here will briefly represent unto you (for ages spent in this delightful theme would scarce suffice to tell it you at large) what it is those blessed souls, who, through the glorious purchase of our bright Redeemer, are

brought hither, are here delivered from : and, for you after understanding it, I shall endeavour to conform my words to your capacity, by the comparing things that are here above to what you know below, although your eyes have told you how infinitely heavenly things transcend whatever can be found on earth. And in the second place, I shall represent, as far as your capacity will bear it, what is that happiness the blessed here enjoy.

‘First then, The souls of all the blessed here are freed for ever from whatsoever it is can make them miserable; the chief of which, you are not ignorant, is sin; it is only that which brings the creature into misery, and entails it on him. The blessed God, at first, made all things happy; all like himself, who is supremely so; and had not sin defaced the beauty of heaven’s workmanship, angels nor men had never known what is meant by misery. It was sin threw the apostate angels down to hell, and spoiled the beauty of the lower world : it was sin defaced God’s image in man’s soul, and made the lord of the creation a slave to his own lust; and by so doing, plunges himself into an ocean of eternal misery, from whence there is no redemption : and sure it is an invaluable mercy, that in this happy place all the inhabitants are freed, for ever freed, from sin through the blood of our redeeming Jesus, “to whom blessing, honour, power, glory, and eternal praises, be ascribed for ever.” Below, the best and holiest souls groan underneath the burden of corruption; sin cleaves to all they do, and leads them captives oftentimes against their wills. “Who shall deliver me,” has been the cry of many of God’s faithful servants, who at the same time have been dear to Jesus. Sin is the heavy clog of saints themselves; while they are embodied in corrupted flesh; and therefore when they lay their bodies down, their souls are like a bird loosed from its cage, and with a heavenly vigour mount up to this blessed region, triumphing over sin, with which they below still

maintained a combat. But here this warfare is at an end, and "Death is swallowed up in victory." Here their bright souls, that were below deformed and stained by sin, are, by the ever blessed Jesus, presented to the eternal Father, "without spot or wrinkle."

'But, secondly, As here the blessed souls are freed from sin, so are they likewise from all occasions of it; which is a great addition to our happiness. Adam himself, in Paradise, though he was in his first creation perfectly innocent, and free from sin, yet was he not freed from temptations to it, which was his great unhappiness; Satan got into Paradise to tempt him, and he too fatally yielded to his temptations: he eat the forbidden fruit, and fell; and by his fall the human nature, and consequently his posterity, all are corrupted: sin, like a gangrene, having ate into the human nature, and corrupted all mankind; and that corruption which every mortal harbours in his breast, is a most dangerous, and oft times prevailing tempter: but here each blessed soul is likewise freed from this. No devil here can tempt them, nor no corruption enter: nothing but what is pure and holy can find admission here: no sly suggestions from that apostate spirit can molest us here: that roaring lion, that below is in a constant motion, still traversing the earth, and seeking whom he may devour, is, with respect to us in this blessed region of life and immortality, bound fast in everlasting chains, and shut up safe in an infernal prison, doomed to the vengeance of eternal fire. Nor shall the world which, by the fall of man has lost its beauty, and degenerated into a shop of emptiness and vanity, and does by its bewitching charms and false allurements draw thousands to perdition, be any more a tempter to those blessed souls who have, through faith and patience, overcome its wiles, and arrived safely here. As strong as its temptations and allurements are to saints themselves, who are still militating with it in the

world below, we that are here possessed of heavenly mansions, look with contempt on all terrene enjoyments: we here are got above the world and all that it can tempt us with; and through the blood of our triumphing Jesus, have got the victory over it, as these bright palms we bear do evidence. There is nothing here that can disturb our peace; but an eternal calm crowns all our happiness, being freed from sin and all temptations to it: and as a consequent hereof.

‘Thirdly, We are here freed from the effects of sin, and that is punishment; which those that are confined to the dark regions of eternal misery are ever groaning under, as that which they cannot bear, and yet as which they must ever suffer. It was sin that ushered death into the world below, and, by heaven’s high decree, is the just wages of it, as every mortal finds: but through the conquest of the Prince of Life, the Lamb of God, slain from the world’s foundation, who, by his dying, overcame both death and him that had the power thereof, the devil, triumphing over sin, death, and hell: sin, death, and hell, are banished hence for ever: For which eternal songs of praise and triumph are ever rendered to his holy name.

‘These are the things,’ continued the great Prophet. ‘we are in this blessed state delivered from; and yet these make up but the least part of the happiness of heaven. Our joys are positive as well as privative, and what those are I now proceed to show you.

‘I. We here enjoy the Beatific Vision, the blessed spring and eternal source of all our happiness: but what this is I can no more declare than finite creatures comprehend infinity: only we find that it continually irradiates our understandings, and fills our souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and with a love so flaming, that nothing but the blessed author of it can satisfy, nor not eternity itself can terminate: It is the reflecting

brightness of the Divine Presence, and transcendently glorious emanations of his goodness, that is the life of our lives, the soul of our souls, and the heaven of heavens; and that which makes us live, and love, and sing, and praise for ever; and which transforms our souls into his blessed likeness. The saints below, whilst they are travelling toward this blessed country, are in their pilgrimage supported by his everlasting arms, by which they are enabled to go from grace to grace: but we that are safely landed on the haven of eternal happiness, are changed from glory unto glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord. But to bring things nearer to your understanding, by this beholding of God's face, we have a real participation and enjoyment of his love, and his blessed smiles make glad our souls, and in his favour we rejoice continually; for in his favour is life. And then by this blessed vision of God, we come to know him above what any did below; for it is a sight of him that irradiates our understandings, and gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; so that, though it be impossible to comprehend the divine majesty, (for who can find out the Almighty to perfection,) yet we have here a perfect apprehension of his nature and divine attributes.

‘II. We have here not only the Beatific Vision, whereby we see God as he is, but we have a real enjoyment and fruition of him; and thereby come to be united to him, and to live in him, and he in us: whereby we come to be partakers of the Divine nature, which shines forth in us with a resplendent brightness. In the world below, the saints do indeed enjoy God in his ordinances: but here we all enjoy him face to face: below, the saints enjoy God in measure: but here we enjoy him without measure: there they have some sips of his goodness; but here we have large draughts thereof, and swim in the boundless ocean of happiness: below, the saints' communion with God is many times broken off, and discontinued: but

here we have an uninterrupted enjoyment of God without intermission or cessation.

‘III. Here we enjoy the perfection of all grace: in the world below the saints see but in part, and know but in part; but here that which is perfect being enjoyed, that which is imperfect is done away: below, love is mixed with fear, and fear hath torment; but here, love is perfect, and perfect love casteth out fear. Here we love the blessed God more than ourselves, and one another like ourselves: we here are all the children of one Father, and all our brethren are alike dear unto us: below, our love was still divided, and run in several channels; but here our love has but one stream, and centres in the ever blessed God, the fountain of our happiness. Our knowledge likewise in the world below was very imperfect, seeing but darkly, as through a broken mirror: but here we see God as he is, and so come to know him as we are known. Our joy is likewise here in its perfection; in the world below it was interrupted by sorrow and sighing, and it was necessarily so, for where there is sin, there will be sorrow: But here all sin (the cause of sorrow) being done away, all sorrow (the effect of sin) shall likewise cease: nay, our very sorrow for sin, when upon earth, does (through the bounty of our blessed Redeemer) give an accession to our joy now we are here.

‘IV. Here we have our capacities enlarged, according to the greatness of the objects we have to contemplate; whilst we were in the world below, no light could shine into our minds, but through the window of our senses, and therefore it was that the blessed God was pleased to condescend to our capacities, and to adapt the expressions of his Majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations: but here, the revelation of the Deity is much more glorious, and our minds are clarified from all those earthly images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. Below, our purest conceptions of God were very imper-

fect; but here the gold is separated from the dross, and our conceptions are more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Below, the objects of glory were humbled to the perceptions of sense; but here the sensible faculties are raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory. Now, therefore, that the divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtains of flesh are spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest vision of God. We now see what we before believed of the glorious nature of the ever blessed God, his decrees and counsels, his providence, and dispensations. We here clearly see, that, from eternity, God was sole existing, but not solitary; and that the Godhead is neither confused in unity, nor divided in number; that there is a priority of order, but no superiority among the sacred persons of the ineffable Trinity, but that they are equally possessed of the same divine excellences, and the same divine empire, and are equally the object of the same divine adoration. Those ways of God, that seemed below unsearchable, and that we thought unlawful to inquire into, we here perceive to be the product of Divine Wisdom, with so much perspicuity and clearness, that truth itself is not more evident.

‘These things,’ added the prophet in a different tone, ‘are some of those that constitute our happiness.’

‘Yet all these things are only what relate unto our souls: but still the happiness of the inhabitants of this blessed region is not complete, until their bodies are raised, and reunited to their souls; in which, through the Divine munificence, myself and the blessed Enoch do enjoy a more peculiar preference, being translated hither in the body, as types both to the ante and post diluvian world, of the resurrection of the ever adorable Son of God, and of all the saints through him. Now, because none but the great Messiah has been actually raised from the dead; he being the first-fruits thereof

(as for Enoch and myself, our bodies have not known death, though they have received a change equivalent thereto,) it is, therefore, more difficult to declare what the resurrection state shall be, it being to be discerned in its perfection only from his glorious body, to which neither that of Enoch's nor mine are comparable in respect to the glory thereof, though both are spiritual bodies, of which I will now show you the distinct properties.

'I. The bodies of the blessed here, at the resurrection, shall be (as mine is now) spiritual bodies: and by your not only seeing, but touching me, (at which word the holy prophet was pleased to give me his hand,) you may be the better able to know what I mean by a spiritual body: that is, a body rarefied from all gross alloys of corruption, and made a pure and refined body, and yet a substantial one, not composed of wind and air, as mortals below are apt too grossly to imagine.'

Here I entreated the holy prophet to bear with me if I acquainted him, that I always understood spiritual as opposed to material, and, consequently, that a spiritual body must be immaterial, and so not capable of being felt, as I found his was.

To this the prophet replied, 'That their bodies were spiritual, not only as they were purified from all corruption, but as they were sustained by the enjoyment of God, without any material refreshments, as meat, drink, sleep, and raiment, which were the support of our bodies below. 'Have you not read,' said the prophet, 'that the blessed Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared in his body to his disciples, when they were met together in a chamber, and the doors shut about them? which plainly evinces the tenuity thereof; and yet he called to St. Thomas to 'come and reach his hand, and thrust it into his side,' which shows it as plainly to be substantial. The beatific vision is here what both our souls and bodies live upon, and are supported by, for ever.

'II. Our bodies in the resurrection state shall be immortal, and incapable of dying. Below, their

bodies are all mortal, dying, and perishing, and subject to be crumbled into dust every moment: but here our bodies will be incorruptible, and freed from death for ever; for "our corruption here shall put on incorruption, and our mortality be swallowed up of life."

Here I desired the prophet to bear with me a little, whilst I gave him an account of my own notions on this matter.

'Say on; for I am ready to resolve your doubt.'

'I have learnt,' said I, 'in the Holy Scriptures, that immortality is an attribute that belongs to God only, and not to men, especially to the bodies of men, which every day's experience tells us are mortal. Therefore St. Paul tells Timothy, that "God *only* hath immortality."'

'When I say the bodies of the blessed here are immortal, I intended it of bodies in their raised state, that then they are subject unto death no more. Man in his corruptible state is mortal, and subject unto death; and there is nothing more evident to all that dwell in the world below, and even the bodies of all those glorified souls that are here, are at this time kept under the power of death. But at the resurrection-state, when they shall be raised up again, they shall be immortal. And as to what you urge from Scripture, that the blessed "God has *only* immortality," it is very true; he is most eminently and essentially so; whereas there is no creature, either angel or man, that can, in that strict sense, be said to be so. We are immortal through his grace and favour, but God is immortal in his essence, and has been so from all eternity; and, in that sense, may well be said *only* to have immortality. And therefore it will not be amiss for you to observe, that whatever the blessed God is, he is eminently and essentially so; in which respect it is likewise said of him, that "He only is holy;" and "there is none good but God;" none righteous, nor none merciful but He. To whom be blessing, and glory, and honour, and praise for ever and for evermore.'

'I have one thing more to be satisfied in, and that is, that seeing there is only yourself and the prophet Enoch that are permitted in the body to be here, which you are pleased to say have suffered a change equivalent to death, but died not; what assurance have you that the bodies of the blessed, that are now under the power of death, shall be raised again? For I see they are gloriously blessed and happy without their bodies, and seem not to have any occasion for them, they have been long since perished and rotten in their graves. The greatest thing that I think can be said for it is, that the blessed Jesus, the spotless Lamb of God, who was truly and really dead, is now alive, and lives for ever.'

To this the prophet, interrupting me, replied, 'What greater proof can you desire than this?'

What I have to say to that is, that the body of the blessed Jesus never saw corruption; and that there is no instance of any body, that ever saw corruption, that was yet raised to life and immortality.'

To this the prophet again answered, 'That though it was true there had been no such instance, yet was the resurrection of the body as sure as the present glorification of the soul; for, as the blessed Jesus died as a public person, so did he also rise again; and therefore is said to be "the first fruits from the dead." He is the head of the church, and cannot be complete without his body, who, in their order, shall be raised up to be with him for ever. The body shall be awaked out of its dead sleep, and, as I was saying, quickened into a glorious immortal life. The body is an essential part of man, as well as the soul; and though the inequality be great in their holy operations, yet their concurrence is necessary. Good actions, in the world below, were indeed designed by the counsel and resolution of the soul, but performed by the ministry of the body; and every grace expresses itself in visible actions thereby. In the sorrows of repentance, tears were supplied by the bodily eyes;

and in thanksgivings, the tongue was used to break forth in the praises of God. And all the victories over pleasure and pain below were obtained by the soul in conjunction with the body. And can you think,' said the prophet, 'that the divine goodness will deal so differently with them, that the soul should be everlastingly happy, and the body be lost in forgetfulness? The one glorified in heaven, the other remain in the dust. From the first setting out in the world below, to the grave, they both ran the same race, and therefore shall enjoy the same reward. When the crown of righteousness and glory shall be given to the blessed at the great day, in the view of all, both soul and body shall partake of the honour thereof. And this,' added the prophet, 'is, I believe, enough to satisfy your doubt, as to the resurrection of the body.'

To which I replied, 'That I had nothing farther to object in that particular. And then desired him to go on in describing the glory of the body in the resurrection-state.'

Upon which the prophet thus proceeded:

'I have already told you that the bodies of the blessed shall be immortal; but cannot, for all that, be so immortal as God is, who is so eminently and essentially so, that, as you well observed, he is said *only* to have immortality; nor yet are they immortal in the same sense as are the blessed angels, who being immaterial substances, are so created; whereas man was created mortal, and has his immortality through the purchase of the blessed Jesus, and renovation of the divine image. Nor is the immortality thus purchased for us like that of the apostate spirits, who are immortal too; but it is with such an immortality as brings along with it a greater weight of misery. Their immortality is such a curse as makes them wish a thousand thousand times that they might be annihilated. But that blessed immortality which we enjoy, is that which is the happiness of heaven, and therefore rightly styled, a "glorious immortality;" and gives

us an assurance, that the happiness we now enjoy, we shall enjoy for ever.

‘iii. Another happiness the bodies of the blessed here enjoy, is, “that they are impassable,” and so are made incapable of sufferings. Below, the saints themselves have oftentimes their bodies made so many-shops of misery; or, like an hospital, full of diseases, which are the common harbingers of death, or when they are not so, are something worse than it; the pains and infirmities of their bodies being such as oftentimes make death much more desirable than such a life. How many times are even good men racked with the gout, or tortured by the stone, with most exquisite and excruciating pain? So that though they abound in the fulness of all those things that mortals count the blessings of the life below, yet are they thereby all imbittered to them by these tormenting pains which have seized upon their bodies. And where this is not, but men have healthy, strong, and vigorous bodies, they often meet with other sufferings, and are exposed to hunger, thirst, cold, and nakedness, which render their lives very much uncomfortable. There, many times, they are shut up in prisons, immured between stone walls, and are, as it were, buried while they are alive, and are as men forgotten in the world. All which considered, must needs render their bodies miserable while below. But, in this happy region, no such evils can attack them. Here their condition is extremely different; no curse can enter here; and such are all those things I have related, as being only the effects of sin. My body is incapable of suffering any evil, either of sin or sorrow; but, on the contrary, through the grace of the blessed Son of God, is now become a receptacle both of light and glory; and so shall all the bodies of saints be likewise in the resurrection-state. Which leads me to declare the fourth endowment with which our bodies shall be ever blessed.

‘iv. Another happiness our bodies shall enjoy in the blessed resurrection-state is, that they shall

be "truly beautiful." And this is none of our least privileges; for below, our bodies are but vile bodies, tending to corruption; in the grave, worms gnaw and feed upon their flesh, and thence proceeds a loathsome savour; at the best they are but houses of clay, and their foundation is in the dust; but here it shall be otherwise—for the bodies of the saints shall be freed from those innocent infirmities that were inseparable from Adam in Paradise, whose soul, united to the body, was the fountain of the natural sensitive life, which being in a perpetual flux, there was a necessity of continual repairs to preserve his life in vigour. Whereas, in this blessed state, the body shall be spiritual in its qualities, and the principle of its life supported by the supernatural power of the spirit, without outward nourishment; and not only so, but a substantial and unfading glory shall shine in them, infinitely above the perishing pride of this world, and the glory of the flesh, and be made like unto the glorious body of Christ, who will change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like his glorious body; and this he will do according to the working of that mighty power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself. This transcendent beauty, which he will put upon the body, shall be the work of his own hands; and, where Omnipotence interposes, nothing is difficult. For the beautifying of a raised body, and putting it into an immortal state of glory, is as easy to the divine power as the first framing it in the womb.

'v. Another part of our happiness is, that "our bodies shall be agile bodies," and move with an inconceivable swiftness. Our bodies, while below, are lumpish and heavy, and are as clogs to the soul; but in the raised state it shall be otherwise. Our bodies shall be like the chariots of Aminadab, and move far swifter than the winged fowls in the aerial heavens.

'vi. Another thing in which our happiness will very much consist is, that "our bodies then (as mine is now) shall be all pure;" and this is an ex

ceeding privilege ; for though they should have all the other forementioned qualities, and be immortal, spiritual, impassable, beautiful, and swift, yet, if they still were sinful, it would blemish all the rest, and would even spoil the happiness we here enjoy in heaven, if sin could enter here. But it is far otherwise ; our glory is, that here our very bodies shall be pure, and have no spot of sin at all upon them. Below, indeed, the bodies of the saints are clogged with sin, and fettered with temptations, which make them to cry out, "O wretched man ! who shall deliver me from this body of death ?" But here they shall enjoy that blessed redemption of their bodies which they wait for there.

'VII. And to conclude, the "bodies of the saints shall (in their resurrection-state) be glorious bodies ;" so glorious, that they shall have a near resemblance to the glorious body of our blessed Redeemer. And this the divine oracles inform us, as also how it shall be wrought. The glorious Lamb of God, the blessed Jesus, he it is "shall change our vile and corruptible bodies, and make them like to his own glorious body ;" it is by his power that the saints' bodies, that by their being turned into corruption are sown in such dishonour, "shall be raised in glory ;" and in that blessed resurrection-state "shall shine more bright than the sun in this triumphant kingdom of their Father."

'And thus, my son,' said the great prophet to me, 'have I informed thee briefly wherein the glory and the happiness of this blessed state we here enjoy consists. Not that herein I have said the thousandth part of that which might be farther still related ; nor could you understand it if I should. For there are some things here we enjoy, like the white stone, and the new name, which no one knows but he that doth receive it.'

The holy prophet having made an end, I humbly thanked him for the information he had given me ; and told him, that though I was incapable (clothed as I was with such a lump of unrefined flesh) to understand all I had heard, or utter what

I saw, yet I had heard and seen enough for ever to convince me both of the excellency and reality of heavenly things; which, in the world below, so many question, and so few believe. 'But let it not offend my Lord,' said I to the prophet, 'if I desire yet further to be resolved in some few things.'

'Speak; and I will endeavour to give you satisfaction.'

'The first thing,' said I, 'I would humbly ask, is, how the blessed here, which are but creatures, though thus glorified, and therefore finite still, can have so perfect an idea of the incomprehensible and infinite Three-One, to know him so as we ourselves are known, as you before affirmed, or else it was my weakness to misunderstand you so?'

'In saying so I do affirm no more than what the sacred oracles contain: for the apostle of the Gentiles, speaking in the days of his flesh to them that then inhabited the world below, told them, they then saw through a glass but darkly; but that in these bright regions they should see him face to face; that then himself knew but in part, but that when he once got hither, he should know him even as he was known.' 'But, my son,' said the prophet, 'these words are not to be understood according to the exactness of the expression; for the sun that lights the lower world may as well be included in a small spark of fire, as the incomprehensible and infinite God may be comprehended by our finite faculties: for beyond the fullest discoveries we can possibly make of the Deity, there remains still an entire infinity of perfections, the knowledge whereof is altogether unattainable by the most intelligent of all those glorious spirits that are the bright and the continual attendants of the throne; and therefore that expression, "As we are known," which gave you so just an occasion to inquire into the sense of it, is to be taken as a note of similitude, and not of equality: the dim light of a candle as truly shines as the bright

luminary of the day : but not with the same extent and splendour. And therefore the sum of what I can say to this point is, that we have here as perfect a knowledge of the blessed God as created beings are capable of receiving, or our own hearts of desiring.'

I then returned my humble thanks to the great prophet, and assured him his answer had entirely satisfied me: and that I found it was only the deficiency of my own understanding that had given him that trouble.

'Sill you mistake the state that I am in,' replied the prophet; 'for there is no such thing as trouble here; nor can there be; for the diffusing of the knowledge of the ever-blessed God, and setting forth his bright eternal excellences, and the displaying of his glory, is that which gives the blessed here the greatest satisfaction and delight; and which will ever do so, throughout the numerous ages of eternity.'

Then with an air of great confidence, I told the holy prophet I had another question yet to ask him.

'Say on, and I will answer you.'

'I saw, among the many blessed souls I passed by, as my bright messenger conveyed me to you, some that appeared to me to shine with greater brightness than others; which gave me a desire to be informed whether or no there be not, among the blessed, different degrees of glory.'

'The happiness and glory which all blessed here enjoy is the result of their communion with, and love unto, the ever-blessed God, whose beatific vision here, as I have said before, is the eternal spring from whence it flows. The more we see, the more we love: and love assimilates our souls into the nature of the blessed object of it; and thence results our glory: this needs must therefore make a difference in the degrees thereof. Not as though there were any want of love to God in any of the blessed here, for that is impossible: there is not one soul amongst the nume-

rous inhabitants of this bright region, but what adores and loves the ever-blessed God with all his utmost powers and faculties. But when it follows, that as those powers and faculties are different, their love must be so too, and so their glory. Nor is there any murmuring or repining in one, to see another's glory much greater than his own; but God is thereby magnified the more, as the eternal source of all their happiness. Nor can there be room for a thought to think it otherwise: who can complain, when all the faculties of each blessed soul is so replenished with the bright emanations of the Deity, that it can hold no more? The ever-blessed God is an unbounded ocean of light and life, and joy and happiness, still filling every vessel that is put therein, till it can hold no more; and though the vessels are of several sizes, whilst each is filled there are none that can complain. Besides, each blessed soul is here wrought up, not only to an acquiescence, but even to such a satisfaction and complacency in the divine good pleasure, that all their happiness consists therein. Thus, though the stars below are each one glorious, yet, since they are of different magnitudes, "one star exceeds another star in glory;" and so, as the divine oracles inform you, it shall be in the resurrection-state. My answer, therefore, to your question is, that those who have the most enlarged faculties do love God most, and are thereby assimilated most into his likeness; which is the highest glory heaven can give. Nor let this seem strange to you; for even among God's flaming ministers, the blessed angels, there are diversities of orders, and different degrees of glory. And these, perhaps, were some of those you saw, as you passed hither.'

Whilst I was thus discoursing with the holy prophet, and with delight heard the solution of those doubts that I desired to be resolved in, a shining form approached me, saying, 'How! Epenetus here!'

I was surprised to hear my name thus mention-

ed, and turning suddenly about, I soon perceived it was the noble Junius, my late deceased friend, who thus accosted me:

‘Dear Epenetus, I am glad to see you in these blessed regions; but am surprised to see you here, not yet divested of mortality: instruct me, friend, by what means you came hither, and also how it was you obtained this privilege; for the unusualness of such a thing is that which makes me so inquisitive.’

I was so overjoyed to see one of my old acquaintance, and one with whom I had been so familiar in the world that I essayed to embrace him in my arms; which he refused, telling me mildly he had some time ago laid down his body, which he had left below, resting in hope until the resurrection: and that, though he was still indeed a substance, yet it was an immaterial one, not to be touched by mortal.

‘But how came you,’ said he again more earnestly, ‘to be brought hither in your mortal and unchanged body?’

I then related to him what I before had spoken to Elijah, and told at large in the prefixed introduction to this vision of my temptation and deliverance.

‘Well, Epenetus,’ said the noble Junius, ‘I see then, there was need enough of such a lecture, as I gave order to be set on foot in the poor world below, after my death, to evidence the being of a Deity, against a sort of men far worse than those in hell, who both believe the being of a God, and tremble at his justice.’ But you, my friend, continued he, that had so long made a profession of his truth, and had such great experience of his goodness, that you should, after all, be brought to question his being and existence, was, indeed, something more than ordinary, and what I hardly could have ever thought, and gives me fresh occasion to adore the ever blessed God, who through his abundant goodness, has now delivered me from all those snares the enemy of

souls was laying for me; and thus preserved me to his heavenly kingdom: blessed for ever be his holy name!

The blessed Elijah, having heard what my friend Junius said, told me, he now would leave me to my friend; and, ere I was aware, the prophet winged away; who having left us, I addressed myself thus to my noble friend:

‘I could not doubt,’ said I, ‘my dearest Junius, but that thou wert one of the blessed inhabitants of this happy region; for such a bright and flaming zeal, as that which in the world made thee so eminent, must needs meet with a suitable reward.’

‘Oh, Epenetus!’ answered he, ‘wert thou but once divested of mortality, thou wouldest have other thoughts than what thou hast: Thou wouldest then see how infinitely short they fall of meriting the least reward, who in the world below, have done their utmost; and that it is only grace, free and unmerited, that brings the soul to glory. For heaven is purchased at no other price than that of the Redeemer’s precious blood, whose dying love, and whose redeeming mercy, are so unspeakably, so vastly great, eternally will scarce suffice to utter it.’

‘Well,’ said I, ‘worthy Junius’——

‘Call me not worthy,’ said he interrupting me, ‘for none are worthy here but he that sits upon the throne, and the blessed Lamb of God: and to ascribe all glory unto him is here a great part of our happiness; for there are myriads of saints and angels round the throne, continually crying, with a loud, but yet melodious voice, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.” No, no,’ continued he, ‘my Epenetus, here is no ascribing any thing to creatures; here they that wear the brightest crowns cast them before the throne, saying, “thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power.”’

'Dear Junius, bear with me,' said I, 'a little, because I am still clogged with mortality; O that I were once divested of it, that I, with thee, might see the great Three-One! and seeing, be transformed into his likeness, which (as I have heard the blessed Elijah tell) is the completion of all happiness.'

'My dear Epenetus,' replied Junius, 'with an air composed of love and sweetness, 'the beatific vision is that which does indeed complete our happiness, and fills our souls with love and joy that is inexpressible, and which is only known by them that feel it.'

'But you must know, my Epenetus, the strongest and the most enlarged faculties of all the bright intelligences here, can hear but little of those radiant effluxes of divine glory, they are so overcoming: for there is no comparison between the most capacious of created beings, and the ineffable glory of the great Creator.'

'Oh noble Junius,' I replied, 'I already believe what you have said: but yet methinks I am willing to know all I can of that which I can never know enough of. And since I know there is nothing more delightful than to be always exercised in the displaying of the glory of the great Author of your happiness, deny not, dearest Junius, to your friend (for such you know I ever was and am) the satisfaction of hearing, from your lips, the mighty wonders of Divine Love, that I may join with you to sing his praise: display those mysteries of his providence, which to the world below are all enigmas, but to your now enlarged understanding are seen in their true light.'

'The praises of the Divine Majesty, O my dear Epenetus, will be the mighty subject of our song through all the ages of eternity; in which both saints and angels join together, and make up one great chorus. And therefore that which you have asked of me, I will gladly undertake; that you may see, by that which he

has done, that he alone is worthy of your love, and of those praises we ascribe unto him. For the most ardent love of all the blessed saints and angels here, is nothing else but the reflection of his love to us; for he that lays in love's own bosom, tells us, we love him because he first loved us. Since, therefore, my dear Epenetus, the love of God to us is the foundation of our love to him, let me present you first with an idea of his love to us, and the advantages that we receive thereby, which are so very many, they are past reckoning up, the mighty sum exceeding all arithmetic can count. But that I may, as you were intimating, set things in a true light, I will first show you how much we owe to his love and goodness, for all his free and undeserved favours vouchsafed to us in the world below. And, therefore, to begin:

'First, In the world below, we owed unto his goodness no less than all the goods we were possessed of: all that we were, and all that we enjoyed, was wholly owing to him. For it was he made us, and not we ourselves: and we were in his hands so like the clay that is in the potter's, he might have made us any other creatures; nay more, we were so much that negative from whence we were extracted, that, had he pleased, he might for ever have left us to that first nothing from whence we had our being. Needs must his love then be the first and original Fountain blessing; all other blessings being but as conduit pipes, by which he does convey his love unto us; and he that sees not that through all is blind. Perhaps a man gets applause by his wisdom, and through his industry heaps up treasures; but was it not from God he had that wisdom; and did not he both give and prosper all his boasted industry? Sure God as much gave us all we enjoyed, as he that gives a beggar a thousand pounds gives him his food and raiment, and all that a thousand pounds can help him to, and which he had been otherwise without.

'Secondly, but then, besides all these more obvious presents of his bounty, there are many things which, in the world below, we were delivered from, that do much enhance the value of the divine goodness to us; which, although perhaps less conspicuous, are no less prized by those below, whom want of them makes sensible of their true value. Should I, my Epenetus, but lead your thoughts unto the galleys, and show you there those wretched captives that lay chained unto their oars, exposed to all the miseries and hardships of a tempestuous sea, and yet do, through the barbarous usage that they meet with on shore, less fear the ocean than any port, save death: or should I draw the curtains of sick and dying men, and open to you that sad scene of sorrow on which so many pine and languish by distempers, so very grievous to be borne that death is rather to be chose than life: or should I bring you to the hospitals, and show you there the various shapes of human miseries, would you not, my dear Epenetus, think it a mercy worth acknowledging, to be delivered from them? And ought we not to prize that Divine Goodness who has made us differ, and freed us from those various sorts of miseries to which so many mortals are exposed: not but sometimes his wisdom sees it meet to exercise his own beloved children with long continued sickness and sharp pains, and other outward and great calamities. But this, my Epenetus, is still a farther evidence of love, and that he might preserve them from the far worse contagion of their sins, or cure them of the evil habits which they had contracted. Have you not seen, my Epenetus, (when in the world below,) a tender mother apply a painful caustic to the neck of her beloved infant, when threatened with an apoplexy? and have you not concluded from it, she thinks the trouble of an issue an inferior evil to convulsive fits? So when we see the ever-blessed God, our heavenly Father, does send infirmities and crosses, to rescue those he loves from under sin's dominions, we safely

may conclude, he thinks affliction a far less evil than the guilt of sin; since he is too wise and too indulgent a physician to cure with such a remedy as shall be worse than the disease.

‘You may remember, Epenetus, that God, by Moses, gives the Israelites a caution, lest prosperity (which is so apt to make men forget all but their enjoyments) should make any of them say in their hearts, My power, and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth; but, on the contrary, commands them to remember the Lord their God, for it is he that gives them power to get wealth. And there was need enough of a caution, for we were too apt to forget that God gave us our corn, and our wine, and our oil. But,

‘Thirdly, the divine goodness exceedingly recommends the advantageousness of his love to us, in that whilst we were below, he gave us so great an earnest of spiritual goods, and of expected joys, that made even that earnest large enough to subsist upon with comfort; which really outvalued, and far transcended all those momentary pleasures it required us to forsake, or keeps up a title to eternal ones.

‘But, though the mercies that the ever-blessed God bestowed upon us in the life below were both so many and so great as made it a fit theme to praise him for heaven, yet is his love of a more lasting date than any thing that is in the lower world: it dies not with our bodies; nor, like the usual custom of our friends below, accompany us to our graves, and leave us: no, Epenetus, God’s love appears most bright when our dark eyes are closed; and then cleaves closer to the soul when she forsakes the body; giving each blessed saint that arrives here, good ground to say of him, what Naomi once did of Boaz, that he hath not left off his kindness to the living and the dead. And therefore, now indeed (says our great Saviour’s happy favourite) “are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, when

he shall appear, we shall be like him." And what that is, is now my present theme.

'It is the love of God, the ever-blessed God, my Epenetus, that gives us this admission into heaven : heaven is the bright seat of so much happiness, that we here scarcely count it amongst our joys that heaven is the seat of them. And here the excellency of the things that we possess does as much disappoint our expectations, as in fruitions, in the world below, the emptiness is wont to do. For you have already heard the Apostle tell us, eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. And now, my Epenetus, our experience tells us so : those pure refined delights that we enjoy, not only stoop not unto sense, but are sublime enough even to transcend imagination. For whatsoever our fancy formed below, as the most perfect ideas and most abstracted notions of complete happiness, our own more happy experience of greater, plainly evince, came short of what we find. Heaven is a soil whose fruitfulness is so confined to joy, that even our disappointments and mistakes, when in the world below, do here contribute to our happiness, which does so much partake of his immensity, whose gift it is, that even the sacred oracles themselves give but a negative description of it ; and does not only remove our thoughts from all that we enjoyed below, but does exalt them above whatever we could fancy there. Nor will you wonder, Epenetus, that it should be so, if you will but consider, that here our faculties are not only gratified with suitable and acceptable objects, but are so heightened and enlarged, that our capacities are both increased and filled. You know, that in the world below a child, not yet released out of the homely prison of the womb, can there have no ideas of those delights which, by the pleasing noises and the glittering objects that will present themselves to him after his birth, will be afforded him. And the child, whilst he continues in his

nonage, though he may with delight look upon emblems finely drawn and painted, yet he cannot imagine what pleasure the same objects will afford him, when age and study shall have ripened his intellectuals, and made him capable of understanding the excellent moralities couched in those curious emblems. Such a double advantage, Epenetus, among others, the admission into these sacred mansions brings to all those to whom that blessing is vouchsafed. For beside that set of objects, if I may so speak, so new and peculiar to this place, that their ideas could never once enter into their thoughts before they were admitted hither; beside this, our now enlarged capacities enable us, even in objects not altogether unknown to us before, to perceive things formerly undiscerned, and derive thence both new and greater satisfaction and delight.

‘Wonder not, my Epenetus, that, in describing of these glorious things, I use expressions you have not heretofore been used to hear; since my bright theme is more above our praises than this blessed region is above the earth. For though my language may seem tumid and aspiring, yet seeming hyperboles may well be used in the description of felicities which makes the most hyperboles but seeming ones: for the joys of heaven appear (like what the stars do to the world below, by reason of their remoteness from them) extremely little, though really in themselves they are so vast, that a less than the largest is much greater than the biggest object upon earth; nay, than the whole earth itself. And therefore, Epenetus, I endeavour (considering you are still clothed with mortality) to give you an account of heavenly things, by representations transcending what they appear to you, that I may thereby give you notions inferior to what they truly are.

‘For here, my Epenetus, the blessed enjoy happiness enough to rectify all those mistaken notions we had formed to ourselves of it below. We are instructed here both how to name and

rate all the felicity which we possess, which is made up of the confluences of perfection, and perpetuity of all true joys; being made happy, (unlike to what philosophy pretends to do,) not by the confinement, but full fruition of our utmost desires, which neither fail in the choice of their objects, nor miss in the enjoyment of them; but are unerringly just, and infallibly accomplished. Here we not only see, but are like those blessed saints whom we in the world below so much admired. Those spirits of just men made perfect, of which the divine oracles have told us, are here our constant and familiar company, into whose blessed society we are not only welcome, but increase it. Here likewise, we behold those glorious spirits, whose nature does invest them with so bright a lustre, that all the disadvantage their disguise gave them when they appeared to us below, would scarce suffice to hinder us from making them the objects of our adoration.

‘But above all, we here behold, my Epenetus, a slight worthy the dying for, that blessed Lamb of God slain from the world’s foundation in the divine decree; that glorious Saviour, of whom the Scripture does so much and excellently entertain us; and who, having done and suffered so much for us, does so highly deserve of us, both upon the score of his infinite perfections and upon the account of his inestimable benefits. Yes, Epenetus, here we behold that holy and divine person, who when he did vouchsafe to pitch his tent among the sons of men below, and dwell with them on earth, thereby to fit them, by his merits and examples, to dwell with him in heaven, did in so admirable a manner mix an awful majesty with an humble meekness, and the assumed infirmities of his human nature, with the coruscations of his divine; expressing in his whole life so perfect and exemplary a virtue, with so much sweetness and gentleness toward those that were aspirers to it, though they came most short of it, that even the Jews themselves could say of him, that he had

done all things well : nay more, his very enemies that were employed to apprehend him as a malefactor, confessed to those that sent him so to do, that never man spake like him. But there, my Epenetus, this blessed Son of God was in the form of a servant, which he put on, that he might suffer for us, and exercise his priestly and prophetic function in the world below : but here we see him in that regal state and condition that belongs to him by virtue of his kingly office, on the account whereof he is styled the King of kings, and Lord of lords, all power and authority being invested in him, both in heaven and earth, encompassed with such radiant majesty and shining splendour, that we may well esteem him what the great evangelic prophet long since called him, The Admirable. For here our ravished souls, by attentive contemplation of his glories, still find more cause to imitate the spouse in Solomon's mystic epithalamium, who, having dwelt upon the beauty of the several excellences that concurred to the accomplishing the divine bridegroom, breaks out into this epiphonema, He is altogether lovely ! His sparkling eyes appear, in his exalted glory on the throne (what the beloved disciple long since represented them) like flames of active fire, and does into the ravished breast of the beholders, shoot flames as pure, as holy, and as deathless, as what the seraphims themselves consist of. And surely Epenetus, since the divine oracles do assure us, as I have said already, "It never entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has here reserved for those that love him ;" that glory can be but imperfectly expressed by the bare epithet of inconceivable, with which the blessed God rewards the meritorious sufferings and obedience of the only-begotten Son of his love ; for whose sake he is pleased to confer on all the numerous company of his elect such unimaginable glories. He that vouchsafes unto so many of his servants a brightness like that of the stars, you cannot but think, Epenetus, does communicate a far more ra

liant lustre to the Sun of righteousness: although your present mortal state denies you to behold the brightness of glory.

‘But all this glorious greatness of our blessed Redeemer does not yet make his kindness less familiar, but only more obliging; for he disdains not, even after his ascension hither, to say, “Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” And that king in the parable, by whom our blessed Lord is represented, is pleased himself to welcome each individual trusty servant with a peculiar, “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

‘Wonder not, Epenetus, that I seem so solicitous to give you an account of the high dignity and super-eminent felicity of our exalted Saviour, and I have endeavoured thus to let you know that the bright Sun of Righteousness is now incapable of suffering eclipses, but shines with unclouded and unequalled splendour; and that I now see Jesus, who (as the author to the Hebrews speaks) was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honour. For it makes heaven be more than heaven to me, to find him reigning here, who suffered so much for me in the world below. And our Redeemer’s happiness, which is so great, and so ineffable, brings an increase to ours according to the ardency of our love to him. Nay, further, Epenetus, let me add, that though our joys are here so great they do not need endearing circumstances, yet does it make our happiness more happy, as it is more a proof of our Redeemer’s love than it is a donative of his bounty.

‘If it was matter of rejoicing to the disgraced apostles, that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name, how much, think you, is their joy now that they are admitted to reign with him? His having supported the hardships and toils to which the afflicted condition of our mortality was exposed, did so much alleviate them, and refresh us under them, that even in this sense,

also, it might be truly said, "The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we were healed."

'But can you think, Epenetus, that he who has relieved us even by his cross, does not do more for us by his crown? Here he not only does admit, but even does invite each faithful servant to no less a blessing than to enter into his Master's joy. So rich a source of happiness did Christ make himself to us, in all his capacities and conditions, that in earth and heaven it was and is his gracious and constant employment to share our griefs, or to impart to us his joys; and either lessen our miseries by his sufferings, or increase our happiness by his felicity.

'Having thus treated of the happiness of those celestial mansions, resulting from the beatific sight of our redeeming Lord, the crown of all our blessedness, I now proceed to tell you, Epenetus, what you, perhaps, may have observed already; that here we do not only see our elder brother, Christ, but also our friends, kindred, and relations, that in the world below lived in his fear, and died in his favour, which is a large addition to our happiness. Nor do we only know our friends, relations, and contemporaries, but all the saints that lived in all the ages of the world. Thus, though Elijah, whom I found discoursing with you, lived in the world below long time before the blessed Messiah was made flesh, yet you no sooner saw, than you straight knew him; and so you will do Adam also, when you see him. Nor can I think this a new notion to you, since you might long ago have learned it from the sacred oracles; our blessed Saviour himself having told us, not only that the children of the resurrection shall be like the angels, (who in the visions of the prophet Daniel, and the apostle John, appear acquainted with each other,) but also in the parable of the miserable rich man and the happy beggar, the father of the faithful is represented as knowing not only the person and present condition, but also the past story of

Lazarus; and the apostle of the Gentiles did, when in the world below, expect his converted and pious Thessalonians to be his crown at the Great Day, when he, having turned many to righteousness, shall, as the beloved Daniel tells us, confer a star like an immortal brightness. And I am sure, my Epenetus, you have often read of the transfiguration of the blessed Redeemer in the holy mount where Moses and Elijah were discoursing with him, and then you cannot forget how readily the three disciples knew them. This was no other but a type of heaven, where all the saints are known to one another. Think you our knowledge here is less than that which Adam had in his first state of innocence? And yet you know that Adam knew Eve, his wife, when she was first brought to him, and told her she was bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh. But your own experience has already told you that it is so; and were you but divested of mortality, as in a few days you will, you will find it with greater evidence.

‘But let me show you, my dear Epenetus, the great advantage that the knowledge of each other here does bring to all the blessed.

‘Here it is that the blessed dwell in an uninterrupted perfect union and communion with God, and with each other; but without knowledge can be no agreement, and without agreement no communion; and where there is no communion there is no happiness: so that to think we did not know each other here, would be to think us short of happiness. Here, Epenetus, the general assembly of the first-born, as they receive their happiness from the bright vision of the ever-blessed God, so they communicate the purest pleasure to each other; an unfeigned ardent love uniting all that pure society. On earth our love was kindled either from some natural relation or other civil tie; or else on the account of some visible excellences, that render a person worthy of our choice and friendship; but here our reasons are far greater, and the degrees of love incomparably more fervent,

for in this supernatural state all carnal alliances and respects do cease. The blessed apostle, even when on earth, told us, If he had known Christ after the flesh, he knew him so no more: for, by the resurrection and ascension of our blessed Lord, he was transported to another world, and had communion with him as a heavenly King, without low regards to the temporal privilege of conversing with him on earth. Our spiritual relation is more near and permanent than the strictest band of nature; here we have all relation to the same heavenly Father, and unto Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and head of our happy fraternity. The principal motives of love, even on earth, are the inherent excellences of a person. Wisdom, holiness, goodness, fidelity, are mighty attractives to affection, and produce a more intimate confederacy of souls than propinquity in nature, or any other carnal respects. Virtue is amiable in an old person, though wrinkled and deformed; and vice is hateful in a young person, though beautiful. And you have seen on earth, my Epenetus, clearer eyes than those of flesh, a purer light than what is sensible, a diviner beauty than what is corporal, and a nobler love than what is sensual; which made the royal prophet declare, "That all his delight was in the excellent." But even spiritual love has its alloys below; for there are relics of frailty in the best of men there, and some blemishes that render them less amiable: but here the image of God is complete by the union of all the glorious virtues requisite to its perfection; and every blessed soul agrees exactly with the first exemplar; a divine beauty shines in them ever durable; a beauty that darts no contiguous fires; a beauty that is inviolable, and cannot suffer injury.

'The true worth of the saints below is very little visible, the least part of it being seen. The earth is fruitful in its plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metals, and veins of marble hidden in its bosom. True grace appears in sensible actions, but its glory is within: but here

their excellences are in open view ; the glory of the blessed God is revealed in them. And, ah ! how attractive is the Divine Likeness to a holy eye ! How doth it ravish me to see my fellow-saints shining with an immortal loveliness ! And their love is reciprocal, proportionable to the cause of it. An equal, constant flame is here preserved by pure materials : here every one is perfectly amiable, and perfectly enamoured with each other. And oh how happy is this state of love ! Well might the Psalmist break out into that rapture, " Behold how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity ! " Had he then seen that happy union which he now here enjoys with all the faithful ones : love is the beauty and the strength of all societies, and the great pleasure of our lives below. How excellent then must be the joy of the blessed here, who witness the accomplishment of what our Saviour prayed for when on earth, " That they may be one, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. " The blessed God is absolutely One in his glorious nature and will, and therefore is unalterably happy ; and the inviolable unity of the saints' love is a bright ray of the essential unity between the sacred persons : here love effectually transforms one soul into another, and makes the glory of each saint redound unto the joy of all. Such is the power of his celestial fire, where we burn, it melts and mixes souls in such an entire union, that, by complacence and an intimate joy, the blessedness of all is, as it were, proper to every one ; as if every one were placed in the hearts of all, and all in the heart of every one ; and sure, where there is love like this, all must needs be delight. And how can it be otherwise, since, in this blessed society, there is a continual receiving and returning of love and joy, with mutual reciprocations of endearment ; and their conversation and intercourse is ravishing. Think, Epenetus, what an entertainment of love and joy there is in the presents and discourses of dear friends below ; how do their mu-

tual aspect, like a chain composed of spirits luminous and active, fasten and draw their souls to one another: and though there be no friendship on earth without alloys, yet the felicity of love consisteth in their conversation; but whatsoever is commendable in friendship is in perfection here; and whatsoever is in alloy, occasioned by men's folly or their weakness, is all abolished here. The blessed here, with overflowing of affection, recount the divine benefits, and all those admirable methods whereby the life of grace was first begun, preserved, and carried on amidst temptations; the succession of mercies in the time of our hopes, and the consummation of all in this time of our enjoyment. Have you not yet heard, Epenetus, the melody both saints and angels make about the throne? And how they all concur in their thanksgivings to God, for making of them reasonable creatures, such as are capable both of loving and enjoying him, when they might have been of the lowest order in the whole sphere of beings, for his compassionate care and providence over them in the world; but especially for his sovereign and singular mercy in electing them to be vessels of honour, and for his powerful grace in rescuing them from the cruel and ignominious bondage of sin; for his free love, that justified them from all their guilt by the death of his only Son, and has now glorified them with himself? We are never weary, Epenetus, of this delightful exercise, but continually bless him for his mercy that endures for ever: yea, the winged cherubims and seraphims about the throne cry one to another to express their zeal and joy in celebrating his eternal purity and power, and the glory of his goodness. And O how unspeakable is the pleasure of this concert! every soul being harmonious, and contributing his part to the full music of heaven. O could the world below but hear the echo of those songs wherewith the heavens above resound! those songs wherewith the saints do here triumph in the just praise and solemn adoration

of the King of spirits! how would it inflame their desires to be joined with them!

‘But, beside all the happiness that does here accrue to us by the knowledge of our friends, kindred, and relations, and that which does result from that communion we have here with God, and with each other, it is to me, my Epenetus, a mighty happiness I here enjoy, in understanding satisfactorily all these deep and obscure mysteries of religion which the profoundest rabbies of the world below were not ashamed to own they could not fully comprehend, but, after all the toll and industry of their most anxious inquiries, were reduced to sit down with the great apostle, Rom. xi. 3, in admiration of that depth, whose bottom they can never fathom. And I acknowledge that it is to me a mighty pleasure that here I understand those obscure passages of the sacred oracles, which, notwithstanding all that bold critics and learned expositors have attempted to illustrate, do, to the world below, remain so still. Nor can it be well otherwise, because they cannot discern how exquisitely the several parts of Scripture are fitted to the several times, persons, and occurrences wherein their all foreseeing Author intended most to use them; all which are obvious to us here, and consequently we discern a perfect harmony between those texts that in the world below seemed most at variance. Here, Epenetus, we have clearly expounded to us those riddles of Providence which have but too often tempted even good men upon earth to question God’s conduct in the government of the world, whilst the calamities and persecutions of virtue and innocence seem approved by Him who accumulates prosperity on their criminal opposers. Here we are thoroughly convinced, that all those seeming irregularities which the heathens thought fit to impute to the giddy whimsies of a female deity, are not only consistent with the divine justice and goodness, but are productions of it. And though such a belief does, to intelligent per-

sons in the world below, seem a great piece of self-denial, yet here it does appear as reasonable as there they find it difficult. For Bildad, who was one of Job's well meaning but unkind comforters, has told us long ago, "They that live upon earth are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because their days there are but a shadow." And the shortness of their transitory lives not permitting them to continue long enough spectators there, to see above a scene or two at most of that great play acted by mankind on the stage of the world, it is no wonder that they are apt to harbour sinister thoughts of the contriver of a plot, neither the beginning nor end whereof they are acquainted with: but when once the whole of the divine conduct in the administration of things shall be disclosed, as here it is, all those revolutions and occurrences of empires, states, families, and particular persons, which mortals are so prone to quarrel with below, do here to us appear so just, so requisite, and seasonable, that those very things that, while we were on earth, tempted us to deny God, do here engage us to praise him: and, indeed, we are not so properly satisfied, as ravished, with the beauties of his providence.

'But, Epenetus, besides this general providence of God, of whose adorable wisdom in the conduct whereof I have been speaking, we are here especially transported with wonder and gratitude at those discoveries of the divine goodness which he is pleased to make of the reasons of his dispensations toward each one in particular. O Epenetus! I have seen toward myself, not only the necessity and justice, but even the mercifulness of those very afflictions that I once (when upon earth) imputed to his severity; and I am now fully convinced, no stroke I met with in the world below (and you can tell, Epenetus, that there I met with many, as well as great afflictions) either they came sooner, or fell heavier, or staid longer, than the occasion that extorted it exacted: and I am satisfied my hopes were never

disappointed, but to secure my title to better things than what I hoped for. Nor was my interest (or what at least I thought then to be so) ever prejudiced, but when it was more to the advantage of what was truly such. Yes, Epenetus, all that unwelcome darkness that on earth surrounded my purblind understanding, is now vanished, and did so at the first dawning of this bright eternal day, wherein the resolution of all those difficulties, which upon earth not only exercised but distressed my faith, is granted to reward it.

‘Here, Epenetus, to draw to a conclusion, we do not only converse with saints and angels, but with that far more infinitely glorious Deity who made them what they are, without at all impoverishing himself: here we not only enjoy heaven, but its Maker, God; and see him as he is, who is our All in all: comprising all the good we value in the creatures, more eminently and fully than the bright luminary of the day excels the twinkling tapers of the night: for we are here so taken up with the contemplation and fruition of that glorious object (in whose infinity all goods are both included and dilated) that ages numberless, as are the joys of the beatific vision, both abound with, will scarce afford us leisure for a diversion to any other pleasures than those itself creates; which are so numerous and so entire, that we desire nothing that we have not, except more tongues to sing more praises to the blessed God, or a capacity to pay him greater thanks for what we have; and even those desires does his gracious acceptance make, in being but conceived, accomplished. For, otherwise, the residents of these bright mansions do scarce know any other want than that of need to wish; the complete blessedness of our condition reducing us to a happy usefulness of wishes by giving us so full a prepossession of all the objects of desire. Here time, like fire, having destroyed whatever it does prey on, does at last die itself, and so goes out

into eternity. And here the nature of our joy is such, that though after some centuries of years they seem to wax older, by having been enjoyed so many ages, yet do they really still continue as welcome and as fresh as at first: It is the peculiar property of our felicity, it always is the same, yet ever new. Weariness argues imperfection, either in the object, or the appetite; the former of which is impossible in God, and the latter ceases here.

‘For our felicity is here so great, there is no need of variety to be a part of it; or, if it does admit variety, it is such a one as consists only in the further knowledge of its first object, God; like that which may be seen on earth in the diversified refractions of the same sparkling diamond. In God there is, if I may properly so speak, such an identical variety, that the fruition of him both satisfies and creates desires, though that without satiety, and this, without disquiet; other delights do, like the clothes men usually wear, grow stale, and quickly are worn out. Whereas those heavenly pleasures we enjoy participate of that prerogative of the garments of the Israelites in the wilderness, not impairing by being used long; but as the needle once touched with the loadstone would never uncompelled forsake it but, after ages, cling no less closely to it than at the first moment of their union, so do the blessed here, with the same undiminished freshness, ever possess their joys as if each moment was the first that they possessed them in. And if our happiness does not improve by our enjoyment of it, it is perhaps because the greatness of it does render it incapable of increasing: or if our pleasures do admit accession, they also do receive it, from the assurance that we have, that we shall taste them ever, and perpetually repeat the same renewed fruitions, to an eternity, endeared with nothing more than by the quiet leisure it does afford us undisturbedly to employ it in celebrating of Jehovah’s praises and in a condition happier in

that by it we are past doing, than past suffering ill. In brief, our inexhausted joys are here so numberless, so immense, that we shall need (as well as have) eternity itself to taste them fully.

‘But I remember, Epenetus, you still are in the body, and may be tired with hearing what I could be for ever relating, so vast is the happiness that I possess; I shall now, therefore, only further add one property of our enjoyed happiness; and that is, that the vast multitude of blessed souls, that are partakers of this joy and glory, does detract nothing from each private share, nor lessen the property each happy saint has in it in particular: this ocean of felicity being so bottomless, that the innumerable company of all the saints and angels never can exhaust it; nor is this strange at all, for in the world below, which does consist of many spacious countries, and many of them divided by large seas from one another, each several nation does alike enjoy the benefit of light; nor is there any can complain that they enjoy it less because another does enjoy it too, but all enjoy its benefits as fully as if none else enjoyed it but themselves. Indeed there is this difference between the Sun of Righteousness and that which shines upon the world below, that whereas the latter, by his presence eclipses all the planets, (his attendants,) the former, though, radiant with a much greater splendour, will, by his presence, impart it to his saints; and so the great apostle of the Gentiles does inform you, where he says, “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear also with him in glory.”

‘It is the language of each blessed soul to his Redeemer, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine;” for each have a particular claim unto him. And David (who, when he lived on earth, was so well skilled in singing songs of praise to his Redeemer) says of all them that put their trust in God, “that he shall abundantly satisfy them with the fatness of his house, and make them drink of the river of his pleasures:” as if

he meant to insinuate, that as when a multitude of persons drink of the same river, none of them are able to exhaust it, and yet each of them has the full liberty of drinking as much as he can, or as much as he could, though none but himself should be allowed to drink of it: so whosoever enjoys God, enjoys him wholly, or at least enjoys him so entirely in relation to his capacity, that the fruition of whatsoever rests unenjoyed in God is forbidden by the immensity of the object, and not the prepossession of his rivals.

‘Thus, Epenetus, I have given you a brief account of our celestial Canaan: it is not, indeed, the thousandth part of that which might be said, yet it is enough to let you see it is a land flowing with milk and honey; and may well enough serve to whet your longing for a more fruitive experimental knowledge of it; for none can fully know the happiness we here enjoy until they come to be partakers of it.’

Junius having finished his excellent discourse, I returned him many thanks, assuring him, that I was so far from being tired with hearing it, that I was exceedingly delighted, as well as informed by it; and that I could not be too much pleased in hearing a description of that happiness which, through the great superabounding merits of my blessed Redeemer, I hoped in a short time to be partaker of.

‘To wait with faith and patience,’ replied the happy Junius, ‘until your mortal body be laid down, is what is now your work; and then you will know far more than I have told you. You will hear, and see, and know things then after another rate than now you do. Your ears are not fitted now to hear those melodies that saints and angels make before the throne, nor can your tongue repeat those songs of praise which here the blessed make continually. Your eyes (though strengthened above those of other mortals) cannot yet behold the brightness of the glory that fills this happy place: though I must grant what

you have seen has given you more suitable ideas of it than all that dwell below can make of heavenly things; which is a favour so great and inexpressible, that you have mighty cause to magnify his great exceeding grace, through whose abundant goodness you were admitted hither.'

'That blessed work,' said I, 'I never can begin too soon; and it is a work I hope will never end, but be as lasting as the cause of it. But, Junius, since I have had the happiness of this conversation with you, may I not also see my mother here? for I am sure she is among the blessed. She early did instruct me in the things of God, and caused me every day to read the Holy Scriptures: her pious exhortations first of all made me look after heavenly and eternal things; and on her dying bed gave me a charge (whatever others did) to serve the Lord. She, I am sure, would much rejoice to see me in this place.'

'Your mother, Epenetus, is here indeed; and will, no doubt, exult and joy in God on your account, as she continually does on her own; but, in this happy place worldly relations cease. Nor is there "male and female here, but all are alike the angels;" for souls cannot be distinguished into sexes; and therefore all relations here are swallowed up in God: however, she whom you call mother in the world below, you shall see presently.' He had no sooner spoke, but, taking me by the hand, far swifter than an arrow from a bow, we passed by several shining forms, clothed in the robes of immortality, who seemed to wonder at me as I passed them; which, I thought, was occasioned by my being there in the poor rags of frail mortality. But Junius having brought me to my mother, for so I thought her, though then I saw a shining form, said to me,

'Farewell, my Epenetus! I have now done what you desired me: your guardian angel will be with you straight, and reconduct you to the

world below ; where, when you come, remember that you do not cease to celebrate the mighty wonders of divinest love, who hath so far indulged your weakness as to admit you hither, and with corporeal eyes to see the immaterial glories of the blessed.'

The noble Junius having left me, I straight drew near the shining form that stood before me, who, compassed round with rays of dazzling lustre, appeared extremely glorious. I hardly could behold her for the exceeding brightness of her countenance, or else it seemed to me so, because I looked with more intenseness on her than on Elijah. or the noble Junius: but, taking it for granted it was my mother, I thus addressed her: 'My dearest mother, I joy to see you clothed in that bright robe of glory, as an inhabitant of these blessed realms of light and immortality.'

'Dear Epenetus,' said my mother to me, 'for what I am, to Him that is on the throne, and to the Lamb, be all the praise and glory; for He alone it is has made me so. This robe of glory, which you see me wear, is only the reflection of his own bright beams! Ah, Epenetus! had not the blessed, for ever blessed, redeeming Jesus, first clothed me with his robe of righteousness, I never should have worn this robe of glory. I do not ask you, Epenetus, (she continued,) how you thus come to be admitted here; I have had already, from Elijah, a full account of that; and must acknowledge the divine condescension has been exceeding great in this permission; for which eternal praise be given to him. Ah, Epenetus! through how many dangers does Divine Grace conduct our souls to glory! I cannot think, but with the most admiring thoughts of Divine Love, how near I once was to eternal ruin! I once was poor, and blind, and naked; cast out unto the loathing of my person, and lay polluted in my filth and blood: but O the abundant grace that found me in that wretched, sad condition, and yet to me made it a time of love, "washed me from

all my filthiness, and purged me from my sin! I once was nothing else but darkness; but, O miraculous and happy change! I now am full of light, and love, and joy; I once was poor and miserable, but now I am enriched with all that heaven can give, or I receive; I once was naked, and exposed to shame, but now I am adorned with robes of light and glory; I once was under sentence of eternal separation from the Divine Presence, but now I am possessed of God, my only life and joy, and supreme good. O how transporting is the comparison of these so wide and contrary extremes! And O how pleasant is the bright day of eternity, after a night so dark and so tempestuous! How does a vivid sense of those past evils produce a far more lively feeling and fruition of my happiness! This makes the everlasting hallelujahs, that I sing to my victorious Deliverer, more ravishing, and more harmonious.'

I must confess I was amazed to find my mother in such an ecstasy and holy transport; and could not forbear saying, 'Ah, my dear mother! you speak like one that is indeed in heaven, and feel the mighty joys you are possessed of.'

'O Epenetus!' she replied again, 'you should not think this strange. The mighty wonders of Divine love and grace will be the subject of our song for ever. Nor should you call me mother here, although I once was so; for here all such relations cease, and are all swallowed up in God, who is alone the great Father of all this heavenly family: and I must tell you, Epenetus, you are far more dear to me, as you are one that love and fear the Lord, and so, through faith, are his adopted son, than as you are the son born of my body. It is here our greatest mercy, that we have God the fountain of our happiness: and that all we enjoy is in and through Him, who is an object that is every way so adequate to all our most enlarged capacities, that in enjoying him, we enjoy all that we can ask or think.'

I then desired to know if I should tell her in

what condition I left my father and my brethren in the world below, when I was carried thither.

To this she answered 'No: since I have put the body off, I have with that too put off all relations in the flesh: here God (said she) is all in all unto me; I have no husband but the blessed bridegroom of my soul; he who is "fairer than the children of men;" who is alone desirable to me: nor have I here any relation else. We are all the children of one Father here, and servants of one Master, whose blessed service is our perfect freedom: and as for those I left behind me, in the world below, I have committed them to God, in whose good pleasure I am happy, whatsoever it be. I shall be glad, and heartily rejoice to see them all heirs of this blessed inheritance; for then I shall be well assured that the will of God is so. But if they should close in with the grand enemy of their salvation, and refuse the grace that is offered them, and thereby perish in the unbelief, God will be glorified in his justice, and in his glory I shall still rejoice. But since, dear Epenetus, you must descend again into the world below, you cannot better show your love to God, and zeal for the promoting of his glory, than by endeavouring to turn them from the ways of unrighteousness: nor do you know but that might be one end why this peculiar privilege has been allowed you.'

Whilst I was discoursing with my mother, a numerous company passed before me, clothed in long robes, white as the morning's brightness, and purer far than any thing that ever yet deserved that name, all having crowns of glory on their heads, which sparkled forth refulgent lustre, and each carrying in his right hand a palm of victory; and as they passed by I heard them say, 'Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb!' And another company who had a very glorious appearance, and covered their faces with their wings, whom I took to be angels, answered them saying, 'Amen. Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and

power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.'

I then inquired what the great company were that were arrayed in garments of so pure a white, with palms of victory in their hands? and I was told they were the noble company of martyrs who, having endured 'great tribulation' in the world, and laid down their lives 'for the word of God, and the testimony which they held, had now their robes washed in the blood of the Lamb, and had palms in their hands in the token of victory. I then asked from whence they came; and I was answered, they came from under the altar, where they had been crying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth.'

'I thought that all the saints here had that rest, and peace, and joy in God, which did not permit them to have any thought of revenge toward their fellow-creatures; and I was the more inclined to think so, because many of them had prayed for their persecutors in the world below, even at the very stakes, and when they have been under the hands of the executioners: and it seems strange to me that that meek and forgiving spirit should be altered here in heaven.'

'The saints here do, indeed, possess that rest, and peace, and joy in God, which is the sum of all their happiness; but having resigned themselves entirely to the divine good pleasure, they cannot but desire God's will may be fulfilled in all respects; and, therefore, knowing that it is the will of God to "render tribulation to them that have troubled them," and that he does design to glorify himself by bringing down his judgments on the antichristian whore, "who had made herself drunk with the blood of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus," they cannot but desire the will of God may be done, and that his name may be glorified; which they know will be the result of his executing judgment upon the great whore; for when Babylon is fallen, a new song shall be put into their

mouths; and then shall be said, "Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets! for God hath avenged you of her." Yea, then shall they sing, "Hallelujah, salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God! for true and righteous are his judgments, for he hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand; and therefore praise our God all ye his servants, and ye that fear his name, both small and great; and again they sing hallelujah." So that their crying under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and truly, dost thou not avenge our blood upon them that are upon earth," is not out of any desire of revenge, but that God may be glorified for his righteous judgments.

Having declared my satisfaction in her answer, I desired to know whether the souls of the blessed understood what affairs were transacting in the world below, and whether they had any concern therein.

To this she replied, 'The sum of all our knowledge here is to know God, the fountain of our happiness: but as to the affairs of particular persons, we are not concerned with them, and are ignorant of them, being finite, though glorified creatures: the being present in all places is an attribute peculiar to God alone, "to whose sight every creature is manifest." Though the prosperity or adversity of the church below, in their militant states, is represented to us by the angels who are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation:" and from what we learn by them we are excited to renew our praises to him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever. The admirable providence of God, in the deliverance and preservation of his church being what we reflect upon with the greatest pleasure and delight, and praise God for with the greatest ardency of affection, desiring also that his glory, and his people's happiness may be consummated

by the redemption of the whole church, which shall not be till the bride hath made herself ready, and the mystical body of Christ be completed.'

I then told her I would only ask her one thing more, (for I believed my conductor was ready to come to me, and that was, in what manner their time was spent in this blessed place, and what their general conversation with each other was?

To this she replied, 'O my Epenetus! how much does that cloud of mortality you still bear about you clog your understanding, even in these bright regions! You speak of us as still clothed with mortal flesh, and consider not that here mortality is swallowed up of life, and time is changed into eternity, without succession or end. It is true indeed, that in the world below there is a continual flux of time, which is divided into hours and days, and weeks, and months, and years, but here there is no such thing; here is no night, by which days are distinguished, nor circling orbs that make the several seasons of the year; but one eternal undivided point lasts here for ever; and therefore, Epenetus, here is no time to spend.

'But then, as to the other part of your question, what our general conversation with each other is? Eternity can only fully answer it. We all have work enough to do throughout the numerous ages of eternity, and that so very pleasant and delightful, it both creates our joy, and still increases it: what is there more delightful to the soul than knowledge? And you may then soon think how vast a field we have to trace it in. And as our knowledge does increase, so do the adorations we pay to the Divine Author of it; for this is our peculiar happiness, that all disquisitions here, of whatsoever kind, tend to illustrate the high praise and adoration of the ineffable Three-One.

'How many wonders of the Deity, my Epenetus, do shine forth in the works of nature in the world below, which still lie hid and undiscovered unto the most elaborate inquirers into them! How many things are there below you know not how

they are done, and yet are well assured that they are? Who can tell how a tree grows from seed, or a variegated curious flower from a poor simple slip, without any diversity? And yet, that so it does is evident enough.

‘Why the magnetic stone attracts the needle, or amber picks up straws, are some of the arcana of nature which yet puzzle the wisest of mortals to tell by what secret sympathies it came to pass, although the matter of fact be very obvious. These things are made intelligible here, and all their occult causes laid open to our view; which likewise does excite our humble adorations and renewed praises to him who is so excellent in working.

‘And then again the wondrous magnitude, as well as contextures of the celestial orbs, (which vain astrologers in vain pretend to penetrate,) are here, both in their causes and effects, made known unto the blessed, who being filled with the highest admiration, adore the ever blessed God for all his works of wonder.

‘Not that we have this knowledge barely by a simple intuition, but by the mutual exercise of our discursive faculties, whereby our knowledge still becomes progressive. Nor do I deny, but that by intuition, our here enlarged faculties receive a great addition; for here we, at one view, can behold more than we can do successively below in many years; to which the swiftness of our motion does also much contribute.

‘But further yet, the works of God’s almighty providence, and with what wondrous wisdom he has overruled and governed all events, is such a theme as well becomes us here to be continually contemplating; and which the more we view, the more we find occasion still to magnify the great Author of our happiness. These contemplations, Epenetus, have often been exceedingly delightful to me, when in the world below, where I saw things but very darkly, and lost much of the beauty of them, by reason of the vanity which

was upon my purblind understanding, by means of which I could not see afar off: but now, that all my intellectual faculties are both enlarged and perfected, and I can see the whole of what I then had but a short and imperfect view of, how much more pleasant and delightful must it be? How much more must it magnify the wisdom of the Contriver, to see men eager in the prosecution of their own designs and the fulfilling of their lusts, not having a regard to any thing besides the satisfying of themselves; and yet to see how all these things are overruled to the effecting of the divine good pleasure, and bringing things long since decreed, to pass, although those instruments knew nothing of it, is indeed well befitting him who is so wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working: to whom be glory, and blessing, and praise, through all the endless ages of eternity.

‘Thus the eternal Father had decreed our great Redeemer should be born in Bethlehem; for so the prophet Micah had declared, saying, “But thou Bethlehem-Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be a Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.” But when the time drew near he should be born, the blessed virgin lived at Nazareth, with her espoused husband, Joseph, designing nothing else but to lie in there; which would have contradicted what the prophet Micah, by divine inspiration, had long ago foretold. And therefore, at this time, Augustus Cæsar, the Roman emperor, puts out a decree, that all the empire should be taxed, and each one in his own city from whence he descended, and that both men and women. This caused the blessed virgin and her espoused husband, to go to Bethlehem (big as she was, and far as was the way,) that they might there be taxed according to what Cæsar had decreed; and the Lord of Life must then be born, according to what Micah prophesied. Cæsar aimed only at his getting money; and yet that aim of his,

through the divine wisdom overruling it, was made a means to bring about the fulfilling of the prophecy in so important a matter as the birth of the Messiah. This tends exceedingly to magnify the mighty wisdom and overruling providence of God, who governs all events to his own glory, and his people's good.

'You knew a person, Epenetus, in the world below, who, having proposed to go to see a friend, and stay at his house some days, fell down, as he was getting upon horseback, and broke his leg, which put a stop to his intended journey. This he esteemed a very great affliction, but in a few days after he received intelligence that his friend's house was casually burnt that very night that he intended to have lain there, and all the people in it. This made him look on that which he first thought to be an affliction, to be a mercy to him; and that the breaking of his leg was but in order to the saving of his life. Many such instances of divine love and goodness might be given, which here the blessed retain a lively sense of, and mention in their songs of praise and hallelujahs to God and to the Lamb.

'Again, my Epenetus, here all the blessed are eternally employed in singing praises to Him, who by his wondrous grace has brought them to his glory. Here we see plainly that gulf of everlasting ruin, in which we were so like to plunge ourselves, had he not stopped our way. He often hedged up our ways with thorns, that so we might not travel to destruction. The various methods of his grace, whereby he brought us to himself, we here repeat to one another, and join in one great chorus to his praise! And whilst we praise him thus, he streams forth emanations of his grace upon us, where we are assimilated more into his likeness, which is our highest happiness.

'Thus, Epenetus, I have answered your last question, which you will better understand when you shall come to be clothed with immortality. In the mean time, walk worthy of the grace you

have received; and let not your attainments puff you up, but give to God the glory of his grace; and let what you have seen and heard have this effect, to make you so much more abhor yourself for your own vileness. The great apostle of the Gentiles, who, like yourself, was once admitted hither, declares he soon met with a "thorn in the flesh," lest he should else have been puffed up too much for the abundant revelations that he had received. Let this example, therefore, keep you humble. Humility will be your best defence; such God exalts, whilst he the proud depresses. I see your guardian angel is coming toward you, and therefore, Epenetus, fare you well till next you come, and then we part no more !

She had no sooner spoke, but she departed, and the bright form that brought me from the world below into this place of happiness, was present with me; to whom, as I was bowing,

'Bow to the throne,' said he, 'and not to me. I have already told you I am thy fellow creature, and therefore worship God alone, for he alone is worthy of adoration. Hast thou observed these heavenly mansions well ?

then replied, 'I have observed, and have almost been ravished with their glory; but even here I could but see in part; their splendour was too bright, and too diaphanous for my beholding. And yet the sight was so extremely delightful, that I could wish I might stay here for ever.'

'I have,' replied the angel, 'a commission to reconduct you to the world below; not only to the earth, from whence I took you, but to the regions of the Prince of Darkness, that thou mayest there see the reward of sin, and what incensed Justice has prepared as the just judgment of their rebellion, who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High. But do not, therefore, be afraid; for as I have a commission to bring thee thither, so I have likewise to bring thee back again, and leave thee in the world from whence I took thee, till thou hast there put off mortality;

and then I shall once more be thy conductor hither, where thou shalt live for ever with all the blessed here.'

These last words of the angel did, as it were, put new life into me. For to leave heaven for earth, was that which did extremely discompose me, and would have rendered me inconsolable, but that I knew the divine will was such. But to leave heaven for hell, was that which turned my very heart within me. However, when I knew it was the divine good pleasure that I should be returned from thence to earth again, and there put off mortality, and then be reconducted up to heaven, I was a little comforted, and found within myself an entire resignation to the will of God; and therefore said, with some assurance, to my bright conductor, that which the blessed God has ordered I shall be always willing to obey, of whose great mercy I have had already so very large experience,

That e'en in hell itself I will not fear,
May I but have his presence with me there

To this my shining guardian answered me, 'Wherever the blessed God vouchsafes his presence, there is heaven; and whilst we are in hell, he will be with us.'

Then bowing low before the Almighty's throne, swifter than thought my guardian angel carried me ten thousand leagues below the imperial Heavens, where, when I saw those mighty globes of fire, those ever-burning lamps of the ethereal heavens, I thus bespoke my bright conductor: 'That I had heard, when I was upon earth, that each one of those fixed stars were worlds: and I believed they might, because, though here they are of such a mighty magnitude, they seem to us on earth just such small things as what the earth seems here; although, indeed, the earth seems here more dark than they do unto those that are on earth. But having such an opportunity I would willingly be informed from you what truth there is therein.'

To this my shining guardian answered me: 'To Him who is Almighty there is nothing impossible; nor can there be a bound set to infinity. The ever-blessed God took six days' time to make the world below, but could as well have made it in one moment, if he had determined; it was the putting forth his almighty power that did effect it; and what that power can do, there is none can tell but he that does possess it. But from his power, to argue it is his will, is no good logic in the school of heaven. He does whatever he pleases, both in heaven above, and in the earth below, and what he pleases to reveal to us, we know; and what he has not so revealed, are secrets locked up in his own eternal counsel, which is a bold and presumptuous curiosity for any creature to inquire into. There is no doubt but he can make as many worlds as there are stars in heaven, if it please him; but that he has done so, he has not yet revealed, nor is it therefore our duty to inquire.'

By this time we were come down to the lowest regions of the air, where I saw multitudes of horrid forms and dismal dark appearances, fly from the shining presence of my bright conductor.

'These sure,' said I, 'are some of the vanguards of hell, so black and so affrighting are their forms.'

'These are,' said my conductor, 'some of the apostate spirits, that wander up and down in the air, and on the earth, like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. And though they are fled hence, you will see them quickly in their own dark territories: for we are now upon the borders of the infernal pit.'

VISIONS OF HELL.

I QUICKLY found the words of my conductor very true; for we were soon surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, which was attended with a stink more suffocating far than that of burning brimstone; my ears were likewise filled with the horrid yellings of the damned spirits, that all the most discordant notes on earth were, in comparison of this, melodious music.

‘Now,’ said my guardian angel, ‘you are on the verge of hell; but do not fear the power of the destroyer, for my commission from the imperial throne secures you from all dangers. Here you may hear from devils and damned souls, the cursed causes of their endless ruin; and what you have a mind to ask, inquire, and they shall answer you: the devils cannot hurt you, though they would, for they are bound by him that has commissioned me, of which themselves are sensible, which makes them rage, and fret, and roar, and bite their hated chains, but all in vain.

We now were come within hell’s territories, placed in the caverns of the infernal deep; there, where earth’s centre reconciles all things, where all effects do in their causes sleep: there, in a sulphureous lake of liquid fire, bound with the adamantine chain of heaven’s fixed decree, sat Lucifer, upon a burning throne; his horrid eyes sparkling with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong pains could make him. Those wandering fiends, that as we came from heaven, fled before us, had, I perceived, given notice of our coming, which put all hell in an uproar, and thus made Lucifer to vent his horrid blasphemies against the blessed God; which he delivered with such an air of arrogance and pride, as plainly shows he only wanted power, but neither rage nor malice.

‘What would the Thunderer have?’ said he: ‘he has my heaven already, whose radiant scep

re this bold hand should bear ; and for those never-fading fields of light, my fair inheritance, confines me here in this dark house of death, sorrow, and wo ! What ! would he have hell from me too, that he insults me here ? Ah ! could I but obtain another day to try it in, I would make heaven shake, and his bright throne to totter. Nor would I fear the utmost of his power, though he had fiercer flames than these to throw me in. Though then I lost the day, the fault was not mine ! No winged spirit in heaven's arched roof bade fairer for the victory than I did. But, ah !' continued he, with a changed voice, 'that day is lost ; and I am doomed, for ever doomed, to these dark territories ! But it is at least some comfort to me still, that mankind's sorrow waits upon my wo ; and since I cannot on the Thunderer, I will wreak the utmost of my rage on them.'

I was amazed to hear his impious speech, and could not forbear saying to my conductor, 'How justly are his blasphemies rewarded.'

'What you have heard from this apostate spirit is both his sin and punishment ; for every blasphemy he belches against heaven, makes hell the hotter to him.'

We then passed on further, amongst dismal scenes of unmingled sorrow, and saw two wretched souls tormented by a fiend, who, without ceasing, plunged them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, whilst they at the same time accused and cursed each other ; one of them saying to his tormented fellow sufferer, 'O cursed be thy face, that ever I set eyes upon thee ! My misery is alone of thee ; I may thank thee for this, for it was thy persuasions that brought me hither ; thou didst entice me ; thou it was that didst ensnare me thus. It was your covetousness and cheating, your oppression and grinding of the poor, that brought me hither. If you had but set me a good example, as you did an ill one, I might, for aught I know, have been in heaven, and there have been as happy as I am now miserable. But,

O wretch that I was! my following your steps has made me in this wretched state, and ruined me for ever. O that I had never seen thy face, or thou hadst never been born to do my soul that wrong that thou hast done!

The other wretch replied, 'And may I not as well blame you? For do you not remember how, at such a time and place, you did entice me, and drew me out, and asked me if I would not go along with you, when I was about other business, about my lawful calling? But you called me away, and therefore are as much in fault as I: though I was covetous, yet you were proud; and if you learned of me your covetousness, I am sure I learned of you my pride and drunkenness; and though you learned of me to cheat, yet you learned me to whore, to lie, and scoff at goodness. Thus, though I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others; and therefore, if you blame me, I can blame you as much. And if I had to answer for some of your most filthy actions, you have still to answer for some of mine: I wish you had never come hither; the very looks of you do wound my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind. It was with you, with you it was, I sinned; O grief unto my soul! and since I could not shun thy company there, O that I could have been without it here!'

From this sad dialogue I soon perceived, that those who are companions upon earth in sin, shall be so too in hell in punishment. And though on earth they love each other's company, they will not care for it in hell. This, I believe, was the true reason why Dives seemed so charitable to his brethren, that he would have them warned, that so they might not come into his place of torment; it was love to himself, and not to them, that was his motive; because had they come thither, his torments would have thereby been increased.

But there were yet more tragic scenes of sor-

row; for, leaving these two cursed wretches accusing of each other, for being authors of each other's misery, we passed on further, beholding several woful spectacles; and among others, one who still had flaming sulphur forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit; which he did with that horrid cruelty and insolence, I could not but say to him, 'Why should you so delight in the tormenting of that cursed wretch, as to be thus perpetually pouring that flaming and infernal liquor down her throat?'

'This is no more but a just retribution,' replied the fiend: 'this woman, in her life time, was such a sordid wretch, that though she had gold enough, could never be satisfied, and therefore now I pour it down her throat: she cared not who she ruined and undid, so she could get their gold; and when she had amassed together a greater treasure than ever she could spend, her love of money would not let her spend so much of it as to supply herself with what the common necessities of life required; for she then went often with an empty belly, though her bags were full, or else she filled it at another's charge; and as for apparel, it either never grew old, or, if it were so, it was always so supplied with patches, that at last it was hard to say which piece was an original, as it is among the learned men on earth to find out the original of the Nile. She kept no house, because she would not be taxed; nor keep her treasure in her hands, for fear she should be robbed; nor let it out without good bonds and mortgages, for fear of being cheated: although she ever cheated all she could, and was herself so great a cheat she cheated her own body of its food, and her own soul of mercy. And yet this cursed wretch had but one child in all the world to give it to, whom she had brought up so, she knew no more how to make use of it than her mother did. Since gold, then, was her god on earth, is it not just that she should have her bellyful in hell?'

When her tormentor had done speaking, I

asked whether what he had said were true or not? To this she answered me, 'No; to my grief it is not.' 'How! to your grief!' said I. 'Yes, to my grief,' said she: 'because, were that which my tormentor tells you true, I should be better satisfied. He tells you that it is gold that he pours down my throat; but he is a lying devil, and speaks falsely; were it but gold, I never should complain; but he abuses me, and, in the stead of gold, he only gives me horrid stinking sulphur: had I my gold I should be happy still; which I so truly valued, that, if I had it here, I scarce would bribe heaven with it, to be removed from hence.'

I could not forbear telling my conductor I was amazed to hear a wretch, in hell itself, so to doat upon her riches, and that too whilst in her tormentor's hands.

'This may,' said he, 'convince you it is a sin that is the greatest of all evils! and where love of that prevails, that soul is lost for ever: and therefore it is the greatest of all punishments to be abandoned to the love of sin. The love of gold (to which this cursed creature is given up) is a more exquisite and fatal punishment than that which the apostate spirits here inflict upon her.'

'O,' said I, 'could but wicked men on earth, for one small moment, lay their ears to this mouth of Tophet, and hear those horrid shrieks of damned souls, they could not be in love with sin again.'

'Eternal Truth has told us otherwise: for those that will not fear his ministers, nor have regard to what his word contains, will not be warned though one should come from hell.'

We had not come much further before we saw a wretched soul lie on a bed of burning steel, almost choked with brimstone, who cried out as one under a dreadful anguish, with a note of desperation; which made me desire of my conductor to stay a while, that I might listen more

attentively to what he said; and thereupon I heard him speak as follows:

'Ah, miserable wretch! Undone for ever, for ever! O these killing words, *For ever!* will not a thousand thousand years suffice to bear that pain, which, if I could avoid it, I would not bear one moment for a thousand thousand worlds? No, no, my misery never will have an end; after the thousand thousand years it will be *for ever* still. O hapless, helpless, hopeless state indeed! It is this *for ever* is the hell of hell! O cursed wretch! cursed to all eternity! how wilfully have I undone myself! O what stupendous folly am I guilty of to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure, at the dear rate of everlasting pain! How often have I been told it would be so! How often pressed to leave those paths of sin, that would be sure to bring me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like the deaf adder, lent no ear unto those charmers, though they charmed so wisely. They told me often, that my short-lived pleasures would quickly issue in eternal pain; and now too sad experience tells me so, it tells me so indeed; but it is too late to help it, for my eternal state is fixed for ever. Why had I reason given me! Why was I made with an immortal soul, and yet should take so little care of it? O how my own neglect stings me to death, and yet I know I cannot, I must not die! but live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths; and yet I might once have helped all this, and would not! O that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might once have been happy; salvation once was offered me, and I refused it: ah! had it been but once, yet to refuse it, had been a folly not to be forgiven; but it was offered me a thousand times, and yet (wretch that I was) I still as often refused it. O cursed sin, that with deluding pleasures bewitches mankind to eternal ruin! God often called, but I as often refused; he stretched his hand out, but I would not mind it; how often have I set at naught his coun-

sel! How often have I refused his reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered, for now he laughs at my calamity, and mocks at that destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but then I would not, and therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo is the just reward of my own doing.'

I could not hear this doleful lamentation, without reflecting on the wondrous grace the ever-blessed God had shown to me: eternal praises to his holy name! For my heart told me that I had deserved, as much as that sad wretch, to be the object of eternal wrath; and it is his grace alone has made us differ.

O how unsearchable his counsels be!
And who can fathom his divine decree?

After these reflections, I addressed myself to the doleful complainer, and told him I had heard his woful lamentation, by which I perceived his misery was great, and his loss irreparable: and told him I would willingly be informed of it more particularly; which might possibly be some alleviation of his sufferings.

'No, not at all; my pains are such as can admit of no relief, no, not for one small moment. But by the question you have asked, I do perceive you are a stranger here; and may you ever be so. Ah! had I but the least hopes still remaining, how would I kneel, and cry, and pray for ever, to be redeemed from hence! But ah! it is all in vain I am lost for ever. Though, that you may beware of coming hither, I will tell you what the damned suffer here.

'Our miseries of this infernal dungeon are of two sorts; what we have lost, and what we undergo; and these I will reduce each to their several heads; although the sad relation will give a greater sting to what I feel.

'First, then, for what we have lost.

'1. In this sad dark abode of misery and sorrow we have lost the presence of the ever-blessed God: and this is that which makes this dung on hell. Though we have lost a thousand worlds, it would not be so much as this one loss: could but the least glimpse of his favour enter here we might be happy; but we have lost it to our everlasting wo.

'2. Here we have likewise lost the company of saints and angels, and in their room have nothing but tormenting devils.

'3. Here we have lost heaven too, the seat of blessedness: there is a deep gulf betwixt us and heaven, so that we are shut out from thence for ever. Those everlasting gates, that let the blessed into happiness, are now for ever shut against us here.

'4. Here we have also lost all pity; and this is to the miserable a great loss: to have that God, who does so pity sinners that he has given his beloved Son to die for them, to be so far from pitying us that he rejoices in our misery, and will do so for ever, is that which stings us to the very heart, and makes our misery beyond measure miserable. And what can be more cruel and tormenting, than to have that Redeemer that gave his very blood for others, deny to pity us? Nor will the saints and angels pity us; but whilst we are here howling in our misery, under the wrath of an incensed God, the saints too shall rejoice that we are damned, and God is glorified in our destruction. Behold the dismal issue of our sin!

'5. To make our wretchedness yet far more wretched, we have lost the hope of ever being in a better state, which renders our condition truly hopeless. He that upon earth is the most miserable, has yet hope left as a reserve. And therefore, it is a common proverb there, "That were it not for hope the heart would break." Well may our heart break then, since we are here both without hope and help. This is what we have lost; which but to think on, is enough to tear and

rend, and gnaw upon our miserable souls for ever. Yet, O that this were all! But we have pain of sense as well as loss: and having showed you what we have lost, I am now to show you what we undergo.

‘1. And first, we undergo variety of torments: we are tormented here a thousand, nay ten thousand several ways. They that are most afflicted upon earth have seldom any more than one distemper at a time; but should they have the plague, the gout, the stone, and fever, at a time, how miserable would they think themselves! Yet all those are but like the biting of a flea to those intolerable pungent pains that we endure. Here we have all the loathed variety of hell to grapple with: here is fire that is unquenchable to burn us with; a lake of burning brimstone ever choking us; eternal chains to tie us; here is utter darkness to affright us, and a worm of conscience that gnaws upon us everlastingly; and any one of these is worse to bear than all the torments mankind ever felt on earth.

‘2. But, as our torments here are various, so are they universal too; afflicting each part of the body, and tormenting all the powers of the soul, which renders what we suffer most insufferable. In those distempers you men are seized withal on earth, though some parts are afflicted, other parts are free; although your body may be out of order, your head may yet be well; and though your head be ill, your vitals may be free; or though your vitals be affected, your arms and legs may be still clear: but here it is otherwise; each member of the soul and body is at once tormented.

‘The eye is here tormented with the sight of devils, who do appear in all the horrid shapes and black appearances that sin can give them. The ear is continually tormented with the loud yellings and continual outcries of the damned. The nostrils smothered with sulphureous flames;

the tongue with burning blisters; and the whole body rolled in flames of liquid fire. And all the powers and faculties of our souls are here tormented: the imagination, with the thoughts of present pain; the memory, with reflecting on what a heaven we have lost, and of those opportunities we had of being saved: our minds are here tormented with considering how vainly we have spent our precious time, and how we have abused it. Our understanding is tormented in the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last for ever: and our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

'3. Another thing that makes our misery insupportable is, the extremity of our torments; the fire that burns us is so violent, that all the water in the sea can never quench it; the pains we suffer here are so extreme, that it is impossible they should be known by any one but those that feel them. Vindictive justice here displays its power, in the sustaining of our dying lives under those great and excruciating pains which scarce an angel's strength could undergo.

'4. Another of the sad ingredients of our misery is the continuity of our torments: as various as universal, and as extremely violent as they are, they are continual too; nor have we the least intermission from them; our miseries are both extreme and always so. If there were any relaxation, it might be some allay; but this makes our condition so deplorable that there is no intermission of our torments, but what we suffer now we must for ever suffer. This causes a hatred to arise in our hearts against God; and our hatred against God continues our miseries upon us.

'5. The society and company we have here is another ingredient in our misery. Tormenting devils, and tormented souls, are all our company; and dreadful shrieks and howlings, under the fierceness of our pain, and fearful execrations

against him, whose power and justice keeps us here, is all our conversation. And here the torments of our fellow sufferers are so far from mitigating our misery, that they increase our pain.

'6. The place in which we suffer is another thing that increases our sufferings; it is the abstract of all misery, a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of fire and brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever; and lastly, hell itself. And such a wretched place as this must needs increase our wretchedness.

'7. The cruelty of our tormentors is another thing that adds to our torments; our tormentors are devils, in whom there is no pity, but being tormented themselves, do yet take pleasure in tormenting us.

'8. All those particulars that I have reckoned up are very grievous; but that which makes them much more grievous is, that they shall ever be so; and all our most intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity: O wretched state of men! To be the everlasting objects of God's revenging justice: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire!" is that which is the perpetual sounding in my ears. O that I could reverse that fatal sentence! O that there was but a bare possibility of doing it! What is it that I would not do or suffer to effect it? And yet almighty power can inflict no more than what I suffer now. But that I shall for ever suffer it, is what I know not how to bear; and yet what I must ever undergo. Thus have I shown you the miserable case that we are in, and shall be in, for ever.'

This wretched soul had scarce made an end of what he was saying, before he was afresh tormented by a hellish fury, who bid him cease complaining, for it was in vain: 'Besides,' said he, 'do not you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not then believe it? You laughed at them that told you of a hell; nay, you were so presumptuous to

dare almighty justice to destroy you? How often have you called on God to damn you? And do you now complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing is this, that you should call so often for damnation, and yet be so uneasy under it? You own yourself you had salvation offered you, and you refused it; with what face, then, can you complain of being damned? I have more reason to complain than you, for you have had a long time of repentance given you; but I was turned to hell as soon as I had sinned: you had salvation offered you, and pardon and forgiveness often tendered you; but I never had any mercy offered me; but was consigned, as soon as I had sinned to everlasting punishment: if I had had the offer of salvation, I never would have slighted it, as you have done; and it had been better for you, that you had never had the offer of it neither; for then damnation had been easier to you: who do you think should pity you, that would be damned in spite of heaven itself?

This made the wretch cry out, 'O do not thus continue to torment me; I know that my destruction is of myself. O that I could forget it! I would be damned, and therefore justly am so.'

Then turning to the fiend that tortured him, he said, 'But it was through thy temptations, cursed devil: it was thou that tempted me to all the sins I have been guilty of; and dost thou now upbraid me? You say you never had a Saviour offered you; but you should call to mind, you never had a tempter neither, as I have had continually of thee, from whose importunate solicitations I never could be free.'

To this the devil scornfully replied, 'I own it was my business to decoy you hither; and you have been often told so by your preachers: they told you plain enough we sought your ruin, and went about continually, like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour; and I was oft afraid you would believe them, as several did, to our

great disappointment: but you were willing to do what we would have you; and since you have done our work, it is but reasonable that we should pay your wages.' And then the fiend tormented him afresh, which caused him to roar out so horribly, I could no longer stay to hear him.

'How dismal,' said I then to my conductor, 'is the condition of these damned souls! They are the devil's slaves while upon earth, and he upbraids, and then torments them for it, when they come to hell.'

'Their malice against all the race of Adam,' said my conductor, 'is exceeding great, because the blessed Redeemer died to save them, and they enjoy that happiness from which those spirits were cast down. And though it is impossible they should prevail upon the elect, so as to make one perish, yet since they know not who they are, they cease not to tempt all to sin, by all the means they can, as knowing that is the way to make them miserable. And because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily prevail upon them to their eternal ruin. And how they treat them here, for listening to their temptations, you have seen already, and will see more of it quickly. And though they do it to satisfy the rage they have against them, as they are men, yet are they therein the Almighty's agents, and the just executioners of his deserved vengeance against sinners, who wilfully destroy themselves by listening to the devil.'

Passing a little further, we saw a multitude of damned souls together, gnashing their teeth with extreme rage and pain, whilst the tormenting fiends with hellish fury poured liquid fire and brimstone continually upon them; they, in the mean time, cursing God, themselves, and those about them, after a tremendous manner.

I could not forbear asking of one fiend that so tormented them, who they were that he used so cruelly? Said he, 'They are those that very well deserve it: these are those cursed wretches that

would teach others the right road to heaven, whilst yet themselves were so in love with hell, that they came hither. These are those souls that have been the great factors of hell upon the earth, and therefore deserve a particular regard in hell. We use our utmost diligence to give every one their share of torments, but will be sure to take care these shall not want, for these have not only their own sins to answer for, but all those whom they have led astray, both by their doctrine and example.'

'Since they have been such great factors for hell, as you say, methinks gratitude should oblige you to use them a little more kindly.'

To this the impudent fiend answered me, in a scoffing manner, 'They that expect gratitude among devils, will find themselves mistaken: gratitude is a virtue; but we hate all virtue, and profess an immortal enmity against it: besides, we hate all mankind, and, were it in our power, not one of them should be happy. It is true, we do not tell them so upon earth, because it is our business to flatter and delude them; but when we have them here, where they are fast enough, (for from hell there is no redemption,) we soon convince them of their folly in believing us.'

From the discourse I had heard of this and others of the devils, I could not but reflect, that it is infinite and unspeakable grace by which any poor sinners are brought to heaven, considering how many snares and baits are laid by the enemy of souls to entrap them by the way; and therefore it is a work well worthy of the blessed Son of God, to save his people from their sins, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. But it is an unaccountable folly in men to refuse the offers of his grace, and to close with the destroyer.

'It is sin that thus hardens their hearts, and blinds their eyes, so that they are incapable of making a right judgment of things, until the Holy Spirit comes and anoints their eyes with his eye salve, which makes the scales of ignorance

and error drop off, whereby they come to see things in a truer light.'

Going further on, I heard a wretch complaining, in a heart breaking strain, against those men that had betrayed him hither.

'I was told,' said he, 'by those that I depended on, and thought could have informed me right, that if I said but "Lord have mercy on me," when I came to die, it would be enough to save me; but how wretchedly I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas, I called for mercy on my death-bed, but found it was too late; this cursed devil here, that told me just before that I was safe enough, then told me that it was too late; and hell must be my portion, as I find it is.'

'You see I told you true at last; and then you would not believe me. A very pretty business! is it not, think you? You spend your days in the pursuit of sin, and wallow in your filthiness, and yet you would go to heaven when you die! Would any but a madman think that would ever do? No, he that in good earnest does intend to go to heaven when he dies, must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he lives. You say some of your lewd companions told you that saying "Lord have mercy on you," when you came to die, would be enough: a very fine excuse! You might have known, if you'd have given yourself but leisure to have read the Bible, that "without holiness there is none shall see the Lord!" Therefore this is the sum of the matter, you were willing to live in your sins as long as you could; you did not leave them at last because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer: and this you know to be true. And could you have the impudence to think to go to heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no; no such matter: you have been warned often enough, that you should "take heed of being deceived, for God would not be mocked; but such as you sowed, you shall also reap:" so that you have no reason to complain of any thing but your own folly

'This lecture of the devil was a very cutting one to the poor tormented wretch,' said I to my conductor, 'and contains the true case of many now on earth, as well as those in hell. But O what a far different judgment do they make in this sad state, from what they did on earth.'

'The reason of that is,' replied my guardian angel, 'because they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be, nor what an evil it is, whilst upon earth: it is inconsideration that is the ruin of so many thousands, who think not what they are doing, nor whither they are going, till it is too late to help it.'

We had not gone much further before we heard another tormenting himself, and aggravating his own misery, by reflecting on the happiness of blessed souls: 'How brightly do the saints in heaven shine in the glory of the divine image, whilst I am deformed! And yet I was once as capable of the glory as they; had the same nature with them, the same reason, the same intellectual faculties and powers; but O what a prodigious monster am I now become! That I should hate, and hate eternally, the eternal Excellency: now sin and death are finished upon me: and O how vast is the difference between us! They have the human nature in its most exalted beauty and perfection; but I, cursed I, have the same nature in its utmost turpitude and depravation; which renders the comparison unspeakably far more unequal than that would be of the most amiable lovely person, flourishing in all the gayety and prime of youthful strength and beauty, with a putrefied and rotten carcass, deformed by the corruption of a loathsome grave. Ah! whence is this amazing difference, but through my wilful and accursed sin? It is sin, it is only sin that has undone me, and brought me here to suffer, as the just reward thereof, the dreadful vengeance of eternal fire.'

We were diverted from giving any further ear unto the stinging self-reflections of this poor lost

creature, by seeing a vast number of tormenting fiends lashing incessantly a numerous company of wretched souls with knotted whips of ever-burning steel; whilst they roared out with cries so very piercing, and so lamentable, I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity, which made me say to one of the tormentors, 'O stay your hand, and do not use such cruelty as this to them who are your fellow creatures, and whom, perhaps, you have yourselves betrayed to all this misery.'

'No,' answered the tormentor very smoothly, 'though we are bad enough, no devil ever was so bad as they, nor guilty of such crimes as they have been: for we all know there is a God, although we hate him; but these are such as never could be brought to own (till they came hither) that there was such a Being.'

'Then these,' said I, 'are atheists: a wretched sort of men indeed; and who had once like to have ruined me, had not eternal grace prevented it.'

I had no sooner spoke, but one of the tormented wretches cries out, with a sad mournful accent, 'Sure I should know that voice: it must be Epenetus.'

'I was amazed to hear my name mentioned by one of the infernal crew; and therefore being desirous to know who it was, I answered, Yes, I am Epenetus; but who are you in that sad lost condition that knows me?'

To this the lost unknown replied, 'I was once well acquainted with you on earth, and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book, so well known by the title of Leviathan.'

'What! the great Hobbes!' said I. 'Are you come hither? Your voice is so much changed, I did not know it.'

'Alas,' replied he, 'I am that unhappy man indeed: but am so far from being great, that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these

sooty territories. Nor is it any wonder that my voice is changed; for I am now changed in my principles, though changed too late to do me any good: for now I know there is a God: but O! I wish there were not, for I am sure he will have no mercy on me: nor is there any reason that he should: I do confess I was his foe on earth, and now he is mine in hell, where he makes me to suffer all that Almighty power can inflict, or that a creature is able to sustain. I feel, I feel, to my eternal wo, that I am now the subject of that power I once so wickedly derided: and it is that wretched confidence I had in my own wisdom that has thus betrayed me.'

'Your case indeed is miserable, and yet you needs must own you suffer justly. For how industrious were you to make proselytes of others, and so involve them in the same damnation. None has more reason to know this than I, who had almost been taken in the snare, and perished irrecoverably.'

'It is that,' says he, 'that stings me to the heart, to think how many perish by my means: I was afraid, when first I heard your voice, that you likewise had been consigned to punishment. Not that I can wish any person happy, for it is my plague to think that any are so whilst I am miserable; but because every soul that is brought hither through my seduction whilst I was on earth, doubles my pains in hell.'

'But tell me, for I fain would be informed, and you can do it, did you indeed believe, when upon earth, there was no God? Could you imagine that the world could make itself? And that the creatures were the causes of their own production? Had you no secret whispers in your soul, that told you it was another made you, and not you yourself? And had you never any doubts about this matter? I have often heard it said, when upon earth, though there are many that profess there is no God, there is not one that thinks so; and it would be strange there should, because there is

none but carry in their bosom a witness for that God whom they deny. Now you can tell whether it is so or no; and you have now no reason to conceal your sentiments.'

'Nor will I, Epenetus,' answered he, 'although the thoughts thereof sting me afresh. I did at first believe there was a God, who was that sovereign self-subsisting power that gave a being to all other creatures: but falling afterward to vicious courses, which rendered me obnoxious to his wrath, I had some secret wishes there was none; for it is impossible to think there is a God, and not withal to think him just and righteous, and consequently that he is obliged to punish the transgressors of his law: and being, I was conscious to myself, obnoxious to his justice, it made me hate him, and wish that there was no such being: but still pursuing the same vicious courses, and finding justice did not overtake me, I then began to hope there was no God; and from these hopes began to frame in my own breast ideas suitable to what I hoped: and having thus, in my own thoughts, framed a new system of the world's original, excluding thence the being of a Deity, I found myself so fond of those new notions, that I at last prevailed upon myself to give them credit, and then endeavoured to fasten the belief of them on others. But before I came to such a height as this, I do acknowledge that I found several checks in my own conscience for what I did, and all along was now and then troubled with some strange uneasy thoughts, as if I should not find all right at last; which I endeavoured to put off, as much as in me lay. And now I find those checking thoughts, that might have been of service to me then, are here the things that most of all torment me. And I must own the love of sin hardened my heart against my Maker, and made me hate him first, and then deny his being. Sin that I hugged so close within my bosom, has been the cursed cause of all this wo; the serpent that has stung my soul to

death: for now I find, maugre my vain philosophy, and those new systems I endeavoured to obtrude upon the world, "there is a God, and that a great and terrible one." I find too now, that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at heaven, and ridicule whatever things are sacred, which were the means I used to spread abroad my cursed notions, and which I always found very successful. For those I could but get to ridicule the sacred oracles, I always looked upon to be in a fair way to become my disciples. But now the thoughts thereof are more tormenting to me than all the torments I sustain by whips of burning steel. For nothing more provokes God than thus to ridicule what he has made so awful.'

'By that which you have said, it is easy to discern the great malignity of sin against the ever-blessed God; from whose most righteous will and law it is a deviation. And it was alone your giving way to sin that entailed all your miseries upon you: and doubtless it is a cruel and tormenting thought to think, that what you suffer is most justly. But it is not my design to aggravate your miseries; only I would ask another question, that I would be resolved in: I heard yourself and others in the same condition with you, cry out of burning steel, and fire, and flames, and yet I cannot discern it: where there is fire there must be some degree of light; and yet it appears to me, you are in utter darkness.'

'O that I could but say I felt no fire! How easy would my torments be to that which now I find them! But alas! the fire that we endure ten thousand times exceeds all culinary fire in fierceness; and is of a quite different nature from it; which you already well observed in one particular, and which is, there is no light at all attends it, as does upon such fire as burns upon earth; but notwithstanding all the fire in hell, we are in utter darkness. But then the fire you burn on earth, is of a preying and devouring nature;

for whatsoever it takes hold of it consumes to ashes; and when it meets with no more fuel it goes out. But here it is not so; for though it burns with that tremendous fierceness, which none but those that feel it know, yet does it not consume, nor never will: we shall ever be burning, yet not be burned: it is a tormenting, but not a consuming fire. The fire that is burned on earth is a corporeal fire, and cannot seize on immaterial substances; and such are our souls: but here the fire seizes upon our souls, and puts them into pain so exquisite, and so tormenting, as cannot be expressed. It was my ignorance of this when upon earth, that made me ridicule the notion of immaterial substances being burned by fire; which here to my own cost, I find too true. And then another difference betwixt the fire that burns us here and that which burns on earth, is this, that you can kindle that whenever you please, and quench it when you will: but here it is otherwise, this fire is kindled by the breath of heaven, like to a stream of brimstone, and it burns for ever; and therefore it is most properly styled, "fire unquenchable," which is here like to be our everlasting portion. And this is what I have to answer to the last sad question that you asked me.'

'Sad indeed!' said I. 'See what Almighty power can inflict on those that violate his righteous law!' I was making some further observations on what I heard, when the relentless fiend, who was before tormenting them, thus interrupted me: 'You see by him what sort of men they were when in the world; and do you not think that they deserve the punishment they undergo?'

To which I answered, 'Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which they now suffer, and which hereafter you shall suffer too; for you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God, and for your sin shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it in the least any excuse to say, you never doubted the being of a God;

for though you knew there was a God, yet you rebelled against him, and therefore shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power ?'

To this the fiend replied, 'It is true ; we know we shall be punished as thou hast said ; but if it be a reason why mankind should have pity shown them, because they fell through the temptations of the devil, it is the same case with me, and all the rest of the inferior spirits, for we were tempted by the bright Sun of the Morning to take part with him ; and therefore, though this aggravates the crime of Lucifer, it should extenuate that of inferior spirits.'

To this my bright conductor, who had not spoken to them since my coming hither, thus replied, with a stern, angry countenance, 'O thou apostate, wicked, lying spirit ! Canst thou affirm those things, and see me here ? Dost thou not know it was thy proud heart made thee take part with Lucifer against the blessed God, who had created thee a glorious creature ? but priding of thyself in thine own beauty, thou wouldest have been above thy blessed Creator, and so wert ready to take part with Lucifer, and justly art with him cast down to hell ; and thy former comeliness and beauty changed to that horrid monstrous form in which thou appearest, as the just punishment of thy rebellious pride.'

To this the apostate spirit only said, 'why dost thou invade my territories, and come here to torment us before our time ?' And, when he had said this, he slunk away, as if he durst not stay to have an answer.

The fiend being gone, I said to my conductor, 'Something I have already heard about the fall of the apostate angels, but have a great desire to be informed in the particulars thereof more fully.'

To this my guardian angel answered me, 'When thou shalt once have put off thy mortality and be translated to the blessed above, there thou shalt know such things as now thou canst not ap-

prehend. And therefore in thy present state, desire not to be wise about what is written. It is enough to know the angels sinned, and for their sin were cast down to hell. But how pure spirits should have such a thought arise in their hearts against the eternal purity that first created them, is what thou art not capable of comprehending now. The angelic spirits are free agents all; created so by the Almighty, who loves to have a free and willing service offered him by all his creatures; and this, the sacred oracles inform you, is called a "reasonable service;" and angels had a time for their probation, even in heaven, as well as Adam had in paradise, and, like him, were created in a possibility of falling. But, as the fall of Adam was repaired by the great promise of the blessed Messiah, so all those blessed spirits, that kept their station in the great defection of the apostate angels, are, through the wondrous grace of the Messiah, confirmed therein for ever, that he might be the head of angels too, as well as men, and have in all things the pre-eminence, as well becomes the eternal son of God. But you have seen enough in these black realms of misery and wo, to show the glory of eternal justice, which even the damned spirits own to be so. For when that great deciding day shall come, in which the bodies of the dead shall rise, and be united to their souls again, and then appear before the judgment seat, there is none of these black souls but will plead guilty, and justify the judgment of damnation that they shall then hear God pronounce against them.'

'I have observed,' said I, 'that all of them complain most of the torment that arises from their own sense of guilt, which justifies the justice of the punishment. This gloomy prison is the best glass to behold sin in its most proper colours; for, were there not the greatest malignity in sin, it would not be rewarded with so extreme a punishment.'

'Your inference is very natural; but there is

yet a better glass than this to see the just demerits due to sin; and that is, by contemplation to behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross; there we may see the dire effects of sin: there we may see its true malignity: for all the sufferings of the damned here are but the sufferings of creatures still; but on the cross you see a suffering God.'

'Surely,' said I, 'justice and mercy did never so triumph and kiss each other as in that fatal hour. For justice here was fully satisfied in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed, and was pleased, because hereby salvation for poor sinners was effected. And O eternal praises to his holy name for ever, that by his grace has made me willing to accept of this salvation, and thereby to become an heir of glory; for I remember some of those lost wretches here have in their bitter lamentations urged, that when salvation has been offered them, they have refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to accept it.'

My shining guardian angel told me hereupon, that he must now conduct me to the earth again, and leave me there, to wait with faith and patience, till my expected happy change should come. And added likewise, that it would be my wisdom to retain always such a due sense of my own unworthiness; for to be vile in my own eyes would make me precious in the sight of God: and that I should not take that caution ill, because the enemy of souls is readiest with temptations to puff up those who had great discoveries and revelations of the mind of God; for there is nothing that the devil aims at more than to destroy those who are most dear to God; and though he ever fails in his attempts, he is unwearied still in his endeavours, and oftentimes prevails so far against them as to persuade them to commit those sins which make them afterward go mourning to their graves.

I gave him thanks for the good counsel he had

given me, and told him, I should be much wanting to myself if I should not accept it as the greatest kindness he could show me. Come then, said he, and let us leave these realms of wo and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants. And in a very little space of time I found myself on earth again, and in that very place where I designed to have committed that black sin of being my own murderer, overcome by the temptations of the devil, who had persuaded me there was no God, as is in the beginning of the book related. But what way it was that I came thither I am not at all able to determine. As soon as I was by the bank that I before had sat on, the bright appearance, by whom I had been all along conducted, said to me,

‘Now, Epenetus, you know where you are, and I must stay no longer with you now; I have another ministration to attend: praise him that sits upon the throne for ever, who has all power in heaven, earth, and hell,

For all the wonders of his love and grace,
That he has shown you in so short a space !

As I was going to reply to him, my bright conductor disappeared, and I was left alone. And having for some time considered of the amazing visions I had seen, and of the wondrous things that I had heard, I scarce believed I was again on earth; nor did I know what time it was I had been absent. And then resolving to return to my own habitation, I first kneeled down, and prayed that I might never lose a lively sense of all those wondrous things that had been shown me; and then rose up again, blessing and praising God for all his goodness, and much admiring at his wondrous grace and condescension.

Being returned unto my house, my family were much surprised to see my countenance so strangely changed, and looked upon me as if they scarce had known me. I asked them what the meaning

was of their unusual admiration? They answered, 'It was the alteration in my visage that had caused it.' In what respect, said I, is it that I am altered so? They told me, yesterday my looks were so extremely clouded and cast down, I seemed the very image of despair. But now my face appeared abundantly more beautiful, and carried all the marks of perfect joy and satisfaction in it.

If you had seen, said I, what I have seen to-day, you would not wonder at the change you see. Then going into my closet, I took my pen and ink, and there wrote down what I had heard and seen, declaring the whole visions, from first to last; all which I hope may have the same effect on those that read them, as they had on me in writing them.

'Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be glory for ever.' Amen.

To whose blessing I recommend it.

END OF THE WORLD TO COME.

THE
BARREN FIG TREE:
OR
THE DOOM AND DOWNFALL
OF THE
FRUITLESS PROFESSOR.

A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. Luke, xiii. 6-9.

At the beginning of this chapter we read, how some of the Jews came to Jesus Christ, to tell him of the cruelty of Pontius Pilate, in mingling the blood of the Gallileans with their sacrifices: a heathenish and prodigious act; for therein he showed, not only his malice against the Jewish nation, but also against their worship, and consequently their God: an action, I say, not only heathenish, but prodigious also; for the Lord Jesus, paraphrasing upon this fact of his, teacheth the Jews, that without repentance they should all likewise perish. Likewise; that is, by the hand and rage of the Roman empire. Neither should they be more able to avoid the stroke, than were those eighteen upon whom the tower of Siloam fell, and slew them, Luke, xix. 42-44: the fulfilling of which prophecy, for their hardness of heart

and impenitency was, in the days of Titus, son of Vespasian, about forty years after the death of Christ. Then, I say, were these Jews, and their city both, environed round on every side, wherein both they and it, to amazement, were miserably overthrown. God gave them sword and famine, pestilence and blood, for their outrage against the son of his love: so 'wrath came on them to the uttermost,' 1 Thess. ii. 16.

Now, to prevent their old and foolish salvo, which they always had in readiness against such prophecies and denunciations of judgment, the Lord Jesus presents them with this parable, in which he emphatically shows them, that their cry of being the temple of the Lord, and of their being the children of Abraham, &c. and their being the church of God, would not stand them in anystead. As who would say, it may be you think to help yourselves against this my prophecy of your utter and unavoidable overthrow, by the interest which you have in your outward privileges: but all these will fail you; for what think you, 'A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none.' This is your case. The Jewish land is God's vineyard, I know it; and I know also, that you are the fig trees. But, behold, there wanteth the main thing, fruit, for the sake, and in expectation of which, he set this vineyard with trees. Now, seeing the fruit is not found amongst you, the fruit, I say, for the sake of which he did at first plant this vineyard, what remains, but that in justice he command to cut you down, as those that cumber the ground, that he may plant himself another vineyard? 'Then said he to the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?' This therefore must be your end, although you are planted in the garden of God; for the barrenness and unfruitfulness of your hearts you must be cut off, yea, rooted up, and cast out of the vineyard.

In parables there are two things to be taken notice of, and to be inquired into of them that read.

First, the metaphors made use of.

Secondly, the doctrine or mysteries couched under such metaphors.

The metaphors in this parable are, 1. A certain man; 2. A vineyard; 3. A fig tree, barren or fruitless; 4. A dresser; 5. Three years; 6. Digging and dunging, &c.

The doctrine, or mystery, couched under these words, is to show us. what is like to become of a fruitless or formal professor. For,

1. By the man in the parable, (Luke, xv. 11.) is meant God the Father. 2. By the vineyard, (Isa. v. 7.) his church. 3. By the fig tree, a professor. 4. By the dresser, the Lord Jesus. 5. By the fig tree's barrenness, the professor's fruitlessness. 6. By the three years, the patience of God, that for a time he extendeth to barren professors. 7. This calling to the dresser of the vineyard to cut it down, is to show the outcries of justice against fruitless professors. 8. The dresser's interceding, is to show how the Lord Jesus steps in, and takes hold of the head of his Father's axe, to stop, or at least to defer present execution of a barren fig tree. 9. The dresser's desire to try to make the fig tree fruitful, is to show you, how unwilling he is that ever a barren fig tree should yet be barren, and perish. 10. His digging about it, and dunging of it, is to show his willingness to apply gospel helps to this barren professor, if haply he may be fruitful. 11. The supposition, that the fig tree may yet continue fruitless, is to show, that when Christ Jesus hath done all, there are some professors will abide barren and fruitless. 12. The determination upon this supposition, at last to cut it down, is a certain prediction of such professors' unavoidable and eternal damnation.

But to take this parable into pieces, and to discourse more particularly, though with all brevity, upon all the parts thereof

A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. The man, I told you, is to represent to us God the Father; by which similitude he is often set out in the New Testament.

Observe then, that it is no new thing, if you find in God's church barren fig trees, fruitless professors; even as here you see is a tree, a fruitless tree, a fruitless fig tree in the vineyard. Fruit is not so easily brought forth as a profession is got into; it is easy for a man to clothe himself with a fair show in the flesh, to word it, and say, Be thou warmed and filled with the best. It is no hard thing to do these with other things; but to be fruitful, to bring forth fruit to God, this doth not every tree, no, not every fig tree that stands in the vineyard of God. Those words also, John, xv. 2, 'Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh away,' assert the same thing. There are branches in Christ, in Christ's body mystical, (which is his church, his vineyard,) that bear not fruit, who see the land of God is to take them away: 'I looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,' Isa. v. 4, that is, no fruit at all that was acceptable with God. Again, Hos. x. 1, 'Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself, none to God; he is without fruit to God.' All these, with many more, show us the truth of the observation, and that God's church may be cumbered with fruitless fig trees, with barren professors.

Had a fig tree. Although there be in God's church that be barren and fruitless, yet, as I said, to see to, they are like the rest of the trees, even a fig tree: it was not an oak, nor a willow, nor a thorn, nor a bramble, but a fig tree, Ezek. xxxiii. 31. 'They come before thee as thy people cometh;' Isa. lviii. 2—4. 'They delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinances of their God: they ask of me the ordinances of justice, they take delight in approaching to God;' and yet but barren, fruitless, and unprofitable professors. Judas also was one

of the twelve, a disciple, an apostle, a preacher, an officer, yea, and such a one as none of the eleven mistrusted, but preferred before themselves, each one crying out, 'Is it I? Is it I?' Mark, xiv 19, none of them, as we read of (John, vi. 70.) mistrusting Judas, yet he in Christ's eye was the barren fig tree, a devil, a fruitless professor. The foolish virgins also went forth of the world with the other, had lamps, and light, and were awakened with the other; yea, had boldness to go forth, when the midnight cry was made, with the other; and thought that they could have looked Christ in the face, when he sat upon the throne of judgment, with the other; and yet but foolish, but barren fig trees, but fruitless professors: Matt. vii. 22, 23. 'Many,' saith Christ, 'will say unto me in that day,' this and that, and will also talk of many wonderful works; yet, behold, he finds nothing in them but the fruits of unrighteousness: they were altogether barren and fruitless professors.

Had a fig tree planted. This word 'planted' doth also reach far; it supposeth one taken out of its natural soil, or removed from the place it grew in once; one that seemed to be called, awakened; and not only so, but by strong hand carried from the world to the church; from nature to grace, from sin to godliness, Psalm lxxx. 8, 'Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt; thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it.' Of some of the branches of this vine were there unfruitful professors.

It must be concluded, therefore, that this professor, that remaineth notwithstanding fruitless, is, as to the view and judgment of the church, rightly brought in thither, to wit, by confession of faith, of sin, and a show of repentance and regeneration; thus false brethren creep in unawares. All these things this word 'planted' intimateth; yea, further, that the church is satisfied with them, consents that they should abide in the garden, and counteth them sound as the rest. But before God, in the sight of God, they are graceless professors, barren and fruitless fig trees.

Therefore, it is one thing to be in the church, or in a profession; and another to be of the church, and to belong to that kingdom that is prepared for the saint, that is so indeed. Otherwise, 'Being planted, shall it prosper? Shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? It shall wither in the furrows where it grew,' Ezek. xvii. 10.

Had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. In his vineyard. Hypocrites, with rotten hearts, are not afraid to come before God in Sion. These words, therefore, suggest unto us, a prodigious kind of boldness and hardened fearlessness. For what presumption higher, and what attempt more desperate, than for a man that wanteth grace, and the true knowledge of God, to crowd himself (in that condition) into the house or church of God? or to make profession of, and desire that the name of God should be called upon him?

For the man that maketh a profession of the religion of Jesus Christ, that man hath, as it were, put the name of God upon himself, and is called and reckoned now (how fruitless soever before God or men) the man that hath to do with God, the man that God owneth, and will stand for. This man, I say, by his profession, suggesteth this to all that know him to be such a professor. Men merely natural, I mean men that have not got the devilish art of hypocrisy, are afraid to think of doing thus: 'And of the rest durst no man join himself to them; but the people magnified them,' Acts, v. 13. And, indeed, it displeaseth God: 'They have brought,' saith he, 'men uncircumcised into my sanctuary.' And, again, Isa. i. 12, 'When you come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?' saith God. They have therefore learned this boldness of none in the visible world, they only took it of the devil; for he, and he only, with these his disciples, attempt to present themselves in the church before God. 'The tares are the children of the wicked one.' The tares, that is, the hypo-

crites, that are Satan's brood, the generation of vipers, that cannot escape the damnation of hell.

Had a fig tree planted in his vineyard. He doth not say, 'he planted a fig tree,' but there was a fig tree there; he had, or found, a fig tree planted in his vineyard.

The great God will not acknowledge the barren fig tree, or barren professor, to be his workmanship, or a tree of his bringing in; only the text saith he had one there. This is much like that in Matt. xv. 13, 'Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.' Here again are plants in his vineyard, which God will not acknowledge to be of his planting. And he seems to suggest, that in his vineyard are many such. Every plant, or all those plants, of professors, that are got into the assembly of the saints, or into the profession of their religion, without God and his grace, shall be rooted up.

'And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man that had not on a wedding garment. And he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having on a wedding garment?' Matt. xxii. 11, 12. Here is one so cunning and crafty, that he beguiled all the guests: he got and kept in the church, even until the king himself came in to see the guests. But his subtilty got him nothing; it did not blind the eyes of the King; it did not pervert the judgment of the righteous. 'Friend, how camest thou in hither?' did overtake him at last, even a public rejection; the King discovered him in the face of all present: 'How camest thou in hither?' my Father did not bring thee hither; I did not bring thee hither; my Spirit did not bring thee hither; thou art not of the heavenly Father's planting; 'how camest thou in hither?' John, xi. 'He that cometh not in by the door, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.' This text is full and plain also to our purpose, for this man came not in by the door, yet got into the church; he got in by climb-

ing; he broke in at the windows, he got something of the light and glory of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in his head; and so (hardy wretch that he was) he presumed to crowd himself among the children. But how is this resented? What saith the king of him? Why, this is his sign, 'The same is a thief and a robber.' See ye here also, if all they be owned as the planting of God, that get into his church, or make profession of his name.

'*Had a fig tree.*' Had one without a wedding garment, had a thief in his garden, at his wedding, in his house. These climbed up some other way. There are many ways to get into the church of God, and profession of his name, besides, and without an entering by the door.

1. There is the way of lying and dissembling; and at this gap the Gibeonites got in, Joshua, ix. 3, 4, &c. 2. There is sometimes falseness amongst some pastors, either for the sake of carnal relations, or the like; at this hole, Tobiah, the enemy of God, got in, Nehem. xiii. 4—6. 3. There is sometimes negligence, and too much uncircumspectness in the whole church, thus the uncircumcised got in, Ezek. xlv. 7, 8. 4. Sometimes again, let the church be never so circumspect, yet these have so much help from the devil that they beguile them all, and so get in. These are of that sort of thieves that Paul complains of, 'False brethern are brought unawares,' Gal. ii. 3. 4. Jude also cries out of these, 'Certain men crept in unawares,' Jude 4. Crept in! What! What, were they so lowly? A voluntary humility, (Col. ii. 22, 23.) a neglecting of the body, not in any honour. Oh! how seemingly self denying are some of these creeping things, that yet are to be held (as we shall know them) an abomination to Israel, Lev. xi. 43, 44.

'But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold, and of silver, but also of wood, and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour,' 2 Tim. ii. 20. By these words the

apostle seems to take it for granted, that as there hath been, so there still will be, these kind of fig trees, these barren professors in the house, when all men have done what they can; even as in a great house there are always vessels to dishonour, as well as those to honour and glory; vessels of wood, and of earth, as well as of silver and of gold. So then there must be wooden professors in the garden of God, there must be earthly, earthen professors in his vineyard: but that methinks is the biting word, 'and some to dishonour.' That to the Romans is dreadful, Rom. ix. 21, 22, but this seems to go beyond it; that speaks but of the reprobate in general, but this of such and such in particular: that speaks of their hardening but in the common way, but this, that they must be suffered to creep into the church, there to fit themselves for their place, their own place, Acts, i. 25. the place prepared for them of this sort only. As the Lord Jesus said once of the Pharisees, 'These shall receive greater damnation,' Luke, xx. 47.

Barren fig tree, fruitless professor, hast thou heard all these things? Hast thou considered that this fig tree is not acknowledged of God to be his, but is denied to be of his planting, and of his bringing unto his wedding? Dost thou not see that thou art called a thief, and a robber that hast either climbed up to, or crept in at, another place than the door? Dost thou not hear, that there will be in God's house wooden and earthly professors, and that no place will serve to fit those for hell, but the house, church, the vineyard of God? Barren fig tree, fruitless Christian, do not thine ears tingle?

And he came and sought fruit thereon. When a man hath got a profession, and is crowded into the church and house of God, the question is not now, hath he life, hath he right principles, but, hath he fruit? 'He came seeking fruit thereon.' It mattereth not who brought thee in hither, whether God or the devil, or thine own vain

glorious heart: but hast thou fruit? Dost thou bring forth fruit unto God? 'And let every one that nameth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from iniquity,' 2 Tim. ii. 19. He doth not say, and let every one that hath grace, or let those that have the Spirit of God; but, 'let every one that nameth the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, depart from iniquity.'

What do men meddle with religion for? Why do they call themselves by the name of the Lord Jesus, if they have not the grace of God, if they have not the Spirit of Christ? God therefore expecteth fruit. What do they do in the vineyard? Let them work, or get them out; the vineyard must have labourers in it. 'Son, go, work to-day in my vineyard,' Matt. xxi. 28. Wherefore want of grace, and want of Spirit, will not keep God from seeking fruit. 'And he came and sought fruit thereon,' Luke, xiii. 6. He required that which he seemeth to have; every man in the vineyard and house of God, promiseth himself, professeth to others, and would have all men take it for granted, that a heavenly principle is in him: why then should not God seek fruit?

As for them, therefore, that will retain the name of Christians, fearing God, and yet make conscience of bringing forth fruit to him, he saith to such, 'Away! As for you, go ye, serve every one his idols, and hereafter also, if ye will not hearken unto me,' &c. Ezek. xx. 39. Barren fig tree, dost thou hear? God expecteth fruit, God calls for fruit; yea, God will shortly come seeking fruit on this barren fig tree. Barren fig tree, either bear fruit, or go out of the vineyard; and yet then thy case will be unspeakably damnable. Yea, let me add, if thou shalt neither bear fruit, nor depart, God 'will take his name out of their mouth,' Jer. xliv. 26. He will have fruit. And I say further, if thou wilt do neither, yet God in justice and righteousness will still come for fruit. And it will be in vain for thee to

count this austerity! He will 'reap where he hath not sown, and gather where he hath not strewed,' Matt. xxv. 24—26. Barren fig tree, dost thou hear?

Quest. What, if a man have no grace?

Ans. Yes, seeing he hath a profession.

And he came and sought fruit thereon. A church then, and a profession, are not places where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves and sins from God. Some of old thought, that because they could cry, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' that therefore they were delivered, or had a dispensation to do the abominations which they committed; as some in our days. For who (say they) have a right to the creatures, if not Christians, if not professors, if not church members? and from this conclusion, let go the reins of their inordinate affections after pride, ambition, gluttony, pampering themselves without fear, Jude 12, daubing themselves with the lust-provoking fashions of the times; to walk with stretched out necks, naked breast, frizzled foretops, wanton gestures, in gorgeous apparel, mixed with gold and pearl, and costly array. I will not here make inspection into their lives, their carriages at home, in their corners and secret holes: but certainly, persons thus spirited, thus principled, and thus inclined, have but empty boughs, boughs that want the fruit that God expects, and that God will come down to seek.

Barren fig tree, thou art not licensed by thy profession, nor by the Lord of the vineyard, to bear these clusters of Gomorrah; neither shall the vineyard, nor thy being crowded among the trees there, shelter thee from the sight of the eye of God. Many make religion their cloak, and Christ their stalking-horse, and by that means cover themselves and hide their own wickedness from men. But God seeth their heart, hath his print upon the heels of their feet, and pondereth all their goings: and at last, when their iniquity is

found to be hateful, he will either smite them with hardness of heart, and so leave them, or awaken them to bring forth fruit. Fruit he looks for, seeks, and expects, barren fig tree!

But what! Come into the presence of God to sin! What! come into the presence of God to hide thy sin! Alas! man, the church is God's garden, and Christ Jesus is the great apostle and high priest of our profession. What! come into the house that is called by my name! into the place where mine honour dwelleth! Psalm xxvi. 8. where mine eyes and heart are continually! 1 Kings, ix. 3. What! come there to sin, to hide thy sin, to cloak thy sin? His plants are an orchard with pleasant fruits, Song, iv. 13. and every time he goeth into his garden, it is 'to see the fruits of the valley,' and to 'see if the vines flourish, and if the pomegranates bud.'

Yea, saith he, he came seeking fruit on this fig tree. The church is the place of God's delight, where he ever desires to be: there he is night and day. He is there to seek for fruit, to seek for fruit of all and every tree in the garden. Wherefore, assure thyself, O fruitless one, that thy ways must needs be open before the eyes of the Lord. One black sheep is soon espied, although in company with many; that is, taken with the first cast of the eye; its different colour still betrays it. I say, therefore, a church and a profession are not places where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves from God, that seeks for fruit; 'My vineyard,' saith God, 'which is mine, is before me,' Song, viii. 12.

And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Barren fig tree, hearken; their continual non-bearing of fruit is a dreadful sign that thou art come to a dreadful end, as the winding up of this parable concludeth.

'*And found none.*' None at all, or none to God's liking; for when he saith, 'He came seeking fruit

thereon,' he means fruit meet for God, Heb. vi. pleasant fruit, fruit good and sweet.

Alas ! it is not any fruit will serve ; bad fruit is counted none : ' Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire,' Matt. iii. 10.

1. There is a fruit among professors that withers, and so never comes to be ripe ; a fruit that is smitten in the growth, and comes not to maturity ; and this is reckoned no fruit : this fruit those professors bear, that have many fair beginnings, or blossoms : that make many fair offers of repentance and amendment ; that begin to pray, to resolve, and to break off their sins by righteousness, but stop at those beginnings, and bring no fruit forth to perfection. This man's fruit is withered, wrinkled, smitten fruit, and is in effect no fruit at all.

2. There is a hasty fruit, such as is the corn upon the house top, Psalm cxxix. or that which springs upon the dunghill, that runs up suddenly, violently, with great stalks and big show, and yet at last proves empty of kernel. This fruit is to be found in those professors, that on sudden are so awakened, so convinced, and so affected with their condition that they shake the whole family, the endship, the whole town. For awhile they cry hastily, vehemently, dolefully, mournfully, yet all is but a pang, an agony, a fit, they bring not forth fruit with patience. These are called those hasty fruits, ' that shall be a fading flower,' Isa. xxviii. 4.

3. There is a fruit that is vile and ill-tasted, Jer. xxiv. how long soever it be in growing ; the root is dried, and cannot convey a sufficiency of sap to the branches, to ripen the fruit. These are the fruit of such professors, whose hearts are estranged from communion with the Holy Ghost, whose fruit groweth from themselves, from their parts, gifts, strength of wit, natural or moral principle. These, notwithstanding they bring forth fruit, are called empty vines, such as bring not forth fruit to God.

'Their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay even the beloved fruit of their womb,' Hos. ix. 16.

4. There is a fruit that is wild: 'I looked for grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes,' Isa. v. 4. I observe that as there are trees and herbs that are wholly right and noble, fit indeed for the vineyard; so there are also their semblance, but wild, not right, but ignoble. There is the grape, and the wild grape; the vine, and the wild vine; the rose and canker rose; flowers, and wild flowers; the apple and the wild apple, which we call the crab. Now, fruit from these wild things, however they may please the children to play with, yet the prudent and grave count them of little or no value. There are also in the world a generation of professors, that notwithstanding their profession, are wild by nature; yea, such as were never cut out, or off, from the wild olive tree, nor never yet planted into the good olive tree. Now, these can bring nothing forth but wild-olive berries, they cannot bring forth fruit unto God. Such are all those that have lightly taken up a profession, and crept into the vineyard without a new birth, and the blessing of regeneration.

5. There is also ultimately fruit, 'Even as a fig tree casteth forth her untimely figs,' Rev. vi. 13. Fruit out of season, and so no fruit to God's liking.

There are two sorts of professors subject to bring forth untimely fruit; 1. They that bring forth fruit too soon: 2. They that bring forth fruit too late.

(1.) They that bring forth too soon. They are such as at present receive the word with joy; anon, before they have root downward, they thrust forth upward: but having no root, when the sun ariseth, they are smitten, and miserably die without fruit. These professors are those light and inconsiderate ones that think nothing but peace will attend the gospel; and so anon rejoice at the tidings, without foreseeing the evil: wherefore, when the evil comes, being unarmed, and so

not able to stand any longer, they die, and are withered and bring forth no fruit: 'He that received the seed in stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; yet he hath not root in himself, but endureth for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended,' Matt. xii. 20, 21. There is in Isa. xxviii. 4, mention made of some, whose glorious beauty shall be a fading flower, because it is fruit before summer. Both these are untimely fruit.

(2.) They also bring forth untimely fruit, that stay till the season is over. God will have his fruit in his season; I say, he will receive them of such men as shall render them to him in their season, Matt. xxi. 41. The missing of the season is dangerous; staying till the door is shut, is dangerous, Matt. xxv. 10, 11. Many there be that come not till the flood of God's anger is raised, and too deep for them to wade through, 'Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him,' Psalm xxxii. 6. Esau's 'afterward' is fearful; 'For ye know that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears,' Heb. xii. 16, 17.

So the children of Israel, they brought to God the fruits of obedience too late: their 'Lo, we be here,' (Numb. xiv. 40—42.) came too late; 'there we will go up,' (ver. 21—23.) came too late: the Lord had sworn, Matt. xxv. 10, and xxvii. 3, before, 'that they should not possess the land.' All these are such as bring forth untimely fruit, Heb. xii. 17. Luke xiii. 25—27. It is the hard hap of the reprobate to do all things too late; to be sensible of his want of grace too late; to be sorry for sin too late; to seek repentance too late; to ask for mercy, and to desire to go to glory, too late.

Thus you see that fruit smitten in the growth, that withereth, and that comes not to maturity, is no fruit. That hasty fruit, such as the 'corn upon

the house-top,' Psalm cxxix. 6, withereth also before it groweth up, and is no fruit. That the fruit that is vile, and ill tasted, is no fruit. That wild fruit, wild grapes, Rev. vi. are no fruit. That untimely fruit, such as comes too soon, or that comes too late, such as come not in their season, are no fruit.

And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Nothing will do but fruit, Matt. xxi. 34, he looked for grapes, when the time of fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruit of it.

Quest. But what fruit doth God expect?

Ans. Good fruit. 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down,' Matt. vii. 19. Now, before the fruit can be good, the tree must be good; for good fruit makes not a good tree, 'but a good tree bringeth forth good fruit. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' A man must be good, else he can bring forth no good fruit; he must have righteousness imputed, that he may stand good in God's sight from the curse of his law; he must have a principle of righteousness in his soul, else how should he bring forth good fruits; and hence it is, that a Christian's fruits are called, Gal. v. 22, 23, 'the fruits of the Spirit, the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ,' Phil. i. 11. The fruits of the Spirit, therefore the Spirit must be there: the fruits of righteousness, therefore righteousness must first be there. But to particularize in a few things briefly.

1. God expecteth fruit that will answer, and be worthy of the repentance which thou feignest thyself to have. Every one in a profession, and that hath crowded into the vineyard, pretendeth to repentance; now of every such soul, God expecteth that the fruits of repentance be found to attend them, Matt. iii. 8, 'Bring forth fruits therefore meet for repentance,' or answerable to thy profession of the doctrine of repentance. Barren fig tree, seeing thou art a professor, and art

got into the vineyard, thou standest before the Lord of the vineyard as one of the trees of the garden; wherefore he looketh for fruit from thee, as from the rest of the trees in the vineyard; fruit, I say, and such as may declare thee in heart and life, one that hath sound profession of repentance. By thy profession thou hast said, I am sensible of the evil of sin. Now, then, live such a life as declares that thou art sensible of the evil of sin. By thy profession thou hast said, I am sorry for my sin: why, then, live such a life as may declare this sorrow. By thy profession thou hast said, 'I am ashamed of my sin,' Psalm xxxviii. 18. yea, but live such a life, that men by that may 'see thy shame for sin,' Jer. xxi. 19. By thy profession thou sayest, I have turned from, let off, and am become an enemy to, every appearance of evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. Ah! but doth thy life and conversation declare thee to be such a one? Take heed, barren fig tree, lest thy life should give thy profession the lie. I say again, take heed, for God himself will come for fruit. 'And he sought fruit thereon.'

You have some professors that are only saints before men, when they are abroad, but are devils and vipers at home; saints by profession, but devils by practice; saints in word, but sinners in heart and life. These men may have the profession, but they want the fruits that become repentance.

Barren fig tree, can it be imagined that those that paint themselves, did ever repent of their pride? or that those that pursue this world, did ever repent of their covetousness? or that those that walk with wanton eyes, did ever repent of their fleshly lusts? Where, barren fig tree, is the fruit of these people's repentance? Nay, do they not rather declare to the world, that they have repented of their profession? Their fruits look as if they had. Their pride saith, they have repented of their humility: their covetousness declareth, that they are weary of depending upon God; and doth not thy wanton actions declare that thou ab-

horrest chastity? Where is thy fruit, barren fig tree? Repentance is not only a sorrow, and a shame for, but a turning from sin to God. Heb. iv. it is called 'repentance from dead works.' Hast thou that godly sorrow that worketh 'repentance to salvation, never to be repented of?' 2 Cor. vii. 10, 11. How dost thou show thy carefulness, and clearing of thyself; thy indignation against sin; thy fear of offending; thy vehement desire to walk with God; thy zeal for his name and glory in the world? And what revenge hast thou in thy heart against every thought of disobedience.

But where is the fruit of this repentance? Where is thy watching, thy fasting, thy praying against the remainders of corruption? Where is thy self-abhorrence, thy blushing before God, for the sin that is yet behind? Where is thy tenderness of the name of God and his ways? Where is thy self-denial and contentment? How dost thou show before men the truth of thy turning to God? 'Hast thou renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness?' 2 Cor. iv. 2. Canst thou commend thyself 'to every man's conscience in the sight of God?'

2. God expecteth fruit that shall answer that faith which thou makest profession of. The professor that is got into the vineyard of God, doth feign that he hath the faith, the most holy, the faith of God's elect. Ah! but where are thy fruits, barren fig tree? 'The faith of the Romans was spoken of throughout the whole world,' Rom. i. 8. 'and the Thessalonians' faith grew exceedingly,' 2 Thess. i. 4.

Thou professest to believe thou hast peace in another world; hast thou let go this, barren fig tree? thou professest thou believest in Christ: is he the joy and the life of thy soul? Yea, what conformity unto him, to his sorrows and sufferings? What resemblance hath his crying, and groaning, and bleeding, and dying, wrought in thee? Dost thou 'bear in thy body the dying of the Lord Jesus? and is also the life of Jesus made manifest in

thy mortal body?' 2 Cor. iv. 10, 11. Barren fig tree, 'Show me thy faith by thy works. Show out of a good conversation thy works with meekness of heart,' James, ii. 18, and iii. 13.

What fruit, barren fig tree, what degree of heart-holiness? for 'faith purifies the heart,' Acts, xv. 9. What love to the Lord Jesus? for 'faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. 6.

3. God expecteth fruits according to the seasons of grace thou art under, according to the rain that cometh upon thee. Perhaps thou art planted in a good soil, by great waters, that thou mightest bring forth branches, and bear fruit: that thou mightest be a goodly vine or fig tree: shall he not therefore seek for fruit, for fruit answerable to the means? Barren fig tree, God expects it, and will find it too, if ever he bless thee. 'For the earth which drinketh in the rain that comes oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for him by whom it is dressed, receives blessing from God: but that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,' Heb. vi. 7, 8.

Barren soul, how many showers of grace, how many dews from heaven, how many times have the silver streams of the city of God run gliding by thy roots, to cause thee to bring forth fruit? These showers and streams, and the drops that hang upon thy boughs, will all be accounted for; and will they not testify against thee, that thou oughtest of right to be burned? Hear and tremble, O thou barren professor! Fruits that become thy profession of the gospel, the God of heaven expecteth. The gospel hath in it the forgiveness of sins, the kingdom of heaven, and eternal life; but what fruit hath thy profession of a belief of these things put forth in thy heart and life? Hast thou given thyself to the Lord; and is all that thou hast to be ventured for his name in this world? Dost thou walk like one that is bought with a price, with the price of precious blood?

4. The fruit that God expecteth is such as is meet for himself, fruit that may glorify God. God's trees

'are trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified:' fruit that tasteth of heaven, abundance of such fruit: for herein, saith Christ, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much fruit,' John, xv. 8. Fruits of all kinds, new and old: the fruits of the Spirit is in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth. Fruits before the world, fruits before the saints, fruits before God, fruits before angels.

O my brethren, what manner of persons ought we to be, who have subscribed to the Lord, and have called ourselves by the name of Israel? 'One shall say, I am the Lord's: and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel,' Isa. xlv. 5. Barren fig tree, hast thou subscribed, hast thou called thyself by the name of Jacob? and surnamed thyself by the name of Israel? All this thou pretendest to, who art got into the vineyard, who art placed among the trees of the garden of God. God doth therefore look for such fruit as is worthy of his name, as is meet for him; as the apostle saith, 'we should walk worthy of God,' that is, so as we may show in every place, that the presence of God is with us, his fear in us, and his majesty and authority upon our actions. Fruits meet for him, such a dependance upon him, such trust in his word, such satisfaction in his presence, such a trusting of him with all my concerns, and such delights in the enjoyment of him, that may demonstrate that his fear is in my heart, that my soul is wrapped up in his things, and that my body, and soul, and estates, and all, are in truth, through his grace, at his dispose, fruit meet for him. Hearty thanks, and blessing God for Jesus Christ, for his good word, for his free grace, for the discovery of himself in Christ to the soul, secret longing after another world, fruit meet for him. Liberality to the poor saint, to the poor world; a life in word and deed exemplary; a patient and quiet enduring of all things, till I have done and suffered the whole

will of God, which he hath appointed for me. 'That on the good ground are they which in honest and good heart, having heard the word, kept it, and bring forth fruit, with patience,' Luke, viii. 15. This is bringing forth fruit unto God; 'having our fruit unto holiness, and our end everlasting life,' Rom. vii. 4. vi. 22. xiv. 8.

5. The Lord expects fruit becoming the vineyard of God. The vineyard, saith he, Isa. v. 1, 'is a very fruitful hill,' witness the fruit brought forth in all ages: the most barren trees that ever grew in the wood of this world, when planted in this vineyard by the God of heaven, what fruit to Godward have they brought forth? 'Abraham offered the more excellent sacrifice,' Heb. xi. 4. 'Enoch walked with God for three hundred years,' ver. 5. 'Noah, by his life of faith, condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness that is by faith,' ver. 7. 'Abraham left his country, and went out after God, not knowing whither he went,' ver. 8. Moses left a kingdom, and run the hazard of the wrath of the king, for the love he had to God and Christ. What shall I say of them who had trials, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection? Heb. xi. 35—37. 'They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted; were slain with the sword; they wandered in sheep skins, and goat skins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Peter left his father, his nets, Matt. iv. 18, 19. Paul turned off from the feet of Gamaliel. Men brought their goods and possessions, (the price of them,) and cast it down at the apostles' feet, Acts, xix. 18—20; and others brought their books together, and burnt them; curious books, though they were worth fifty thousand pieces of silver. I could add, how many willingly offer themselves in all ages, and their all, for the worthy name of the Lord Jesus, to be racked, starved, hanged, burned, drowned, pulled in pieces, and a thousand calamities. Barren fig tree, the vineyard of God hath been a faithful place; what dost thou there? What dost thou

bear? God expects fruit according to the soil of the vineyard.

6. The fruit which God expecteth is such as becometh God's husbandry and labour. The vineyard is God's husbandry, or tillage, 'I am the vine,' saith Christ, 'and my Father is the husbandman,' John, xv. 1. And again, 1 Cor. iii. 9. 'Ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.' The vineyard, God fences it, God gathereth out the stones, God builds the tower, and the winepress in the midst thereof. Here is labour, here is protection, here is removing of hindrances, here is convenient purgation, and all that might be fruit.

Barren fig tree, what fruit hast thou? Hast thou fruit becoming the care of God, the protection of God, the wisdom of God, the patience and husbandry of God? It is the fruit of the vineyard, that is either the shame or the praise of the husbandman. 'I went by the field of the slothful,' saith Solomon, 'and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and lo, it was grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof,' Prov. xxxiv. 30—32.

Barren fig tree, if men should make a judgment of the care, and pains, and labour of God in his church, by the fruit that thou bringest forth, what might they say? Is he not slothful, is he not careless, is he not without discretion? O! thy thorns, thy nettles, the barren heart and barren life, is a continual provocation to the eyes of his glory, as likewise a dishonour to the glory of his grace. Barren fig tree, hast thou heard all these things?

And he came and sought fruit thereon. The question is not now, What thou thinkest of thyself, nor what all the people of God think of thee, but what thou shalt be found in that day, when God shall search thy boughs for fruit. When Sodom was to be searched for righteous men, God would not, in that manner, trust his faithful servant Abraham, but still as Abraham interceded, God answered, 'If I find fifty, or forty and five,

there, I will not destroy the city,' Gen. xviii. 20, 21, 26, 27. Barren fig tree, what sayest thou? God will come down to see, God will make search for fruit himself.

'And he came and sought fruit thereon, and found *none*. Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none; cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?'

These words are the effects of God's search into the boughs of a barren fig tree; he sought fruit, and found none, none to his liking, none pleasant and good. Therefore, first, he complains of the want thereof to the dresser, calls him to come, and see, and take notice of the tree; then signifieth his pleasure: he will have it removed, taken away, cut down from cumbering the ground.

Observe, the barren fig tree is the object of God's displeasure; God cannot bear with a fruitless professor.

Then said he, &c. Then, after this provocation; then, after he had sought and found no fruit, then. This word 'then,' doth show us a kind of an inward disquietness; as he saith also in another place, upon a like provocation: 'Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book, shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven,' Deut. xxix. 18—20.

'Then,' intimateth, that he was now come to a point, to a resolution, what to do with this fig tree. 'Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard,' that is, to Jesus Christ, 'Behold,' as much as to say, Come hither, here is a fig tree in my vineyard, here is a professor in my church, that is barren, that beareth no fruit.

Observe, However the barren professor thinks of himself on earth, the Lord cries out in heaven against him, Isa. v. 5, 'And now go to, I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up;

and I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down.'

Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit, &c. Observe, 'These three years.' God cries out that his patience is abused, that his forbearance is abused: Behold, these three years I have waited, forborne, these three years I have deferred mine anger: 'Therefore will I stretch out mine hand against thee, and destroy thee: I am weary with repenting,' Jer. xv. 6.

'These three years.' Observe God layeth up all the time; I say, a remembrance of all the time, that a barren fig tree, or a fruitless professor, mispendeth from this world. As he saith also of Israel of old, 'forty years long was I grieved with this generation,' Psalm xcv. 10.

'These three years,' &c. These three seasons observe, God remembers how many seasons thou hast mispent; for these three signify so many seasons. 'And when the time of fruit drew nigh,' that is, about the season they begin to be ripe, or that according to the season might so have been. Barren fig tree, thou hast had time, seasons, ministers, afflictions, judgments, mercies, and what not! and yet hast not been fruitful: thou hast had awakenings, reproofs, threatenings, comforts, and yet hast not been fruitful: thou hast had patterns, examples, citations, provocations, and yet hast not been fruitful. Well, God hath laid up thy three years with himself. He remembers every time, every season, every sermon, every minister, affliction, judgment, mercy, awakening, pattern, example, citation, provocation; he remembers all: as he said of Israel of old, 'they have tempted me these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice,' Numb. xiv. 22. and again, 'I remember all their wickedness,' Hos. vii. 2.

'These three years, &c. He seeks for the fruit of every season: He will not that any of his sermons, ministers, afflictions, judgments, or mercies, should be lost, or stand for insignificant things: he will have according to the benefit bestowed,

2 Chron. xxxii. 24, 25. Ezek. xiv. 23. He hath not done without a cause all that he hath done, and therefore he looketh for fruit: look to it, barren fig tree.

I come seeking fruit. Observe, This word 'seeking' signifies a narrow search; for when a man seeks for fruit on a tree, he goes round it, and round it, now looking into this bough, and then into that, he peeps into the inmost boughs and the lowermost boughs, if fruit may be thereon.

Barren fig tree, God will look into all thy boughs, he will be with thee in thy bed fruits, thy midnight fruits, thy closet fruits, thy family fruits, thy conversation fruits, to see if there be any among all these that are fit for, or worthy of the name of the God of heaven, 'He sees what the children of Israel do in the dark,' Ezek. viii. 12. 'All things are open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do,' Heb. iv. 12, 13.

Seeking fruit on this fig tree. I told you before, that he keeps in remembrance the times and seasons that the barren professor had wickedly mispent. Now, forasmuch as he also pointeth out the fig tree, 'this fig tree,' it sheweth that the barren professor, above all professors, is a continual odium in the eyes of God. This fig tree, this man Coniah, Jer. xxii. 28, 'This people draw nigh to me with their mouth, but have removed their hearts far from me.' God knows who they are among all the thousands of Israel, that are the barren and fruitless professors, his lot will fall upon the head of Achan, though he be hid amongst six hundred thousand men. 'And he brought his household, man by man, and Achan, the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, was taken,' Josh. vii. 17, 18. This is the Achan, this is the fig tree, this is the barren professor.

There is a man hath a hundred trees in his vineyard, and at the time of the season, he walketh into his vineyard to see how the trees flourish, and as he goes, and views, and pries, and ob-

serves how they are hanged with fruit, behold, he cometh to one where he findeth naught but leaves. Now he makes a stand, looks upon it again and again; he looks also here and there, above and below; and if, after all this seeking, he finds nothing but leaves thereon, then he begins to cast in his mind how he may know this tree next year, what stands next it, or how far it is off the hedge; but if there be nothing there that may be as a mark to know it by, then he giveth it a private mark, ('The Lord set a mark upon Cain,' Gen. iv,) saying, Go thy way, fruitless fig tree, thou hast spent this season in vain.

Yet doth he not cut it down; I will try it another year; may be this was not a hitting season. Therefore he comes again next year, to see if now it have fruit; but as he found it before, so he finds it now, barren, barren, every year barren; he looks again, but finds no fruit. Now he begins to have second thoughts. How! neither hit last year nor this. Surely the barrenness is not in the season, sure the fault is in the tree; however I will spare it this year also, but will give it a second mark; and it may be, he toucheth it with a hot iron, because he begins to be angry.

Well, at the third season he comes again for fruit, but the third year is like the first and second, no fruit yet; it only cumbereth the ground. What now must be done with this fig tree? Why, the Lord will lop its boughs with terror; yea, the thickest of those professors with iron. I have waited, saith God, these three years; I have missed of fruit these three years; It hath been a cumber-ground these three years; cut it down. Precept hath been upon precept, and line upon line, one year after another, for these three years, but no fruit can be seen, I find none, fetch out the axe! I am sure this is the fig tree, I know it, from the first year, barrenness was its sign then, barrenness is its sign now; make it fit for the fire. 'Behold the axe is laid to the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down and cast into the fire,' Matt. iii. 10.

Observe, my brethren, God's heart cannot stand toward a barren fig tree. You know thus it is with yourselves; if you have a tree in your orchard, or vineyard, that doth only cumber the ground, you cannot look upon that tree with pleasure, with complacency and delight: no; if you do but go by it, if you do but cast your eye upon it; yea, if you do but think of that tree, you threaten it in your heart, saying, I will hew thee down shortly, I will to the fire with thee shortly; and it is in vain for any to think of persuading of you to show favour to the barren fig tree; and if they should persuade, your answer is irresistible. It takes up room, and doth no good; a better may grow in its room.

Cut it down. Thus when the godly among the Jews, Jer. xiv. 17, made prayers, that rebellious Israel might not be cast out of the vineyard, what saith the answer of God? Jeremiah, xv. 1, 'Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet could not my mind be toward this people: wherefore cast them out of my presence, and let them go forth.'

What a resolution is here! Moses and Samuel could do almost any thing with God in prayer. How many times did Moses, by prayer, turn away God's judgments from even Pharaoh himself! yea, how many times did he by prayer preserve Israel, when in the wilderness, (Psalm cvi. 23,) from the anger and wrath of God! Samuel is reckoned excellent this way, yea, so excellent, that when Israel had done that fearful thing, as to reject the Lord, and choose them another king, (1 Sam. xli,) he prayed, and the Lord spared, and forgave them. But yet neither Moses nor Samuel can save a barren fig tree. No; though Moses and Samuel stood before me, that is, pleading, arguing, interceding, and supplicating, yet could they not incline my heart to this people.

Cut it down. Ay, but, Lord, it is a fig tree! I it was a thorn, or a bramble, or a thistle, the matter would not be much; but it is a fig tree, or a vine. Well, but mark the answer of God, Ezek.

xv. 2, 3, 'Son of man, What is the vine tree more than any tree, or than a branch that is among the trees of the forest? Shall wood be taken thereof to do any work? or will men take a pin of it to hang any vessel thereon?' If trees that are set, or planted for fruit, bring not forth that fruit, there is betwixt them and the trees of the forest no betterment at all, unless the betterment lieth in the trees of the wood, for they are fit to build withal; but a fig tree or a vine, if they bring not forth fruit, yea, good fruit, they are fit for nothing at all but to be cut down, and prepared for the fire: and so the prophet goes on, 'Behold it is cast into the fire for fuel.' If it serve not for fruit, it will serve for fuel, and so 'the fire devoureth both the ends of it, and the middle of it is burnt.'

Ay, But these fig trees and vines are church members, inhabitants of Jerusalem! So was the fig tree mentioned in the text. But what answer hath God prepared for these objections? Why, ver. 6, 7, 'Thus saith the Lord God, As the vine tree among the trees of the forest, which I have given to the fire for fuel: so will I give the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will set my face against them, they shall go out from one fire, and another fire shall devour them.'

Cut it down. The woman that delighteth in her garden, if she have a slip there, suppose (if it was fruitful) she would not take five pounds for it, yet if it bear no fruit, if it wither, and dwindle and die, and turn cumber ground only, it may not stand in her garden. Gardens and vineyards are places for fruit, for fruit according to the nature of the plant or flowers. Suppose such a slip as I told you of before should be in your garden, and there die, would you let it abide in your garden? No; away with it, away with it. The woman comes into her garden toward the spring, when first she gives it a slight cast with her eye, then she sets to gathering out the weeds, and nettles, and stones; takes a besom, and sweeps the walks; this done, she falls to prying into her herbs and

slips, to see if they live, to see if they are likely to grow.

Now, if she comes to one that is dead, that she is confident will not grow, up she pulls that and makes to the heap of rubbish with it, where she despisingly casts it down, and valueth it no more than a nettle, or a weed, or than the dust she hath swept out of her walks. Yea, if any that see her should say, Why do you so? the answer is ready, It is dead, it is dead at root; if I had let it stand, it would but have cumbered the ground. The strange slips (and also the dead ones) 'they must be a heap in the day of grief, and of desperate sorrow,' Isa. xvii. 10, 11.

Cut it down. There are two manners of cutting down: 1. When a man is cast out of the vineyard. 2. When a man is cast out of the world.

I. When a man is cast out of the vineyard.

And that is done two ways: 1. By an immediate hand of God. 2. By the church's due execution of the laws and censures which Christ for that purpose hath left with his church.

1st. God cuts down the barren fig tree by an immediate hand, smiting his roots, blasting his branches, and so takes him away from among his people. 'Every branch,' saith Christ, 'that beareth not fruit in me, he (my Father) taketh away,' John, xv. 2. He taketh him out of the church, he taketh him away from the godly.

There are two things by which God taketh the barren professor from among the children of God? 1. Strong delusions. 2. Open profaneness.

1. By strong delusions; such as beguile the soul with damnable doctrines, that swerve from faith and godliness: Isa. lxvi. 3, 4, 'They have chose their own ways,' saith God, 'and their soul delighteth in their abominations. I also will choose their delusions, and will bring their fears upon them.' I will smite them with blindness, and hardness of heart, and failing of eyes; and will also suffer the tempter to effect his designs upon

them: 2 Thess. ii. 10—12, 'God will send them strong delusions, that they may believe a lie; that they all may be damned who believe not the truth, but have pleasure in unrighteousness.'

2. Sometimes God takes away a barren professor by open profaneness. There is one hath taken up a profession of that worthy name, the Lord Jesus Christ; but this profession is but a cloak; he secretly practiseth wickedness: he is a glutton, a drunkard, or covetous, or unclean. Well, saith God, I will loose the reins of his lusts before him; he shall be entangled with his beastly lusts; he shall be overcome of ungodly company. Thus they that turn aside to their own crooked ways, Psalm cxxv. 5, 'The Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.' This is God's hand immediately; God is now dealing with this man himself. Barren fig tree, hearken, thou art crowded into a profession, art got among the godly, and there art a scandal to the holy and glorious gospel: but withal so cunning, that, like the sons of Zeruiah, thou art too hard for the church: she knows not how to deal with thee. Well, saith God, I will deal with that man myself, Ezek. xiv. 6, 8, 'I will answer that man myself.' He that sets up his idols in his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and yet comes and appears before me, 'I will set my face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb; and I will cut him off from the midst of my people, and he shall know that I am the Lord.'

But, 2dly, God doth sometimes cut down the barren fig tree by the church, by the church's due execution of the law and censures which Christ for that purpose hath left with his church. This is the meaning of that in Matt. xviii. 1 Cor. v. 1 Tim. i. 20, upon which now I shall not enlarge. But which way soever God dealeth with thee, O thou barren fig tree, whether by himself immediately, or by his church, it amounts to one and the same; for if timely repentance prevent not, the

end of that soul is damnation. They are blasted, and withered, and gathered by men, God's enemies; and at last being cast into the fire, burning must be their end: 'That which beareth briars and thorns, is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned,' Heb. vi. 8.

2. Again, sometimes by 'Cut it down,' God means cast it out of the world: thus he cut down Nadab and Abihu, when he burned them up with fire from heaven, Numb. xvi. 31—33. Thus he cut down Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, when he made the earth to swallow them up. Thus he cut down Saul, 1 Sam. xxxi. 4, when he gave him up to fall against the edge of his own sword, and died. Thus he cut down Ananias with Sapphira his wife, when he struck them down dead in the midst of the congregation, Acts, v. 5. 10. I might here also discourse of Absalom, Ahitophel, and Judas, who were all three hanged; the first by God's revenging hand, the other were given up of God to be their own executioners. These were barren and unprofitable fig trees, such as God took no pleasure in, therefore he commanded to cut them down. The Psalmist saith, Psalm lviii. 9, 'He shall take them away as with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.' Barren fig tree, hearken; God calls for the axe, his sword, Bringeth it hither, here is a barren professor: cut him down, why cumbereth he the ground?

Why cumbereth it the ground? By these words the Lord suggesteth reasons of his displeasure against the barren fig tree: it cumbereth the ground. The Holy Ghost doth not only take an argument from its barrenness, but because it is a cumber ground, therefore cut it down; wherefore it must needs be a provocation.

1. Because as much as in him lieth, he disappointeth the design of God in planting his vineyard; 'I looked that it should bring forth fruit.' 2. It hath also abused his patience, his long suffering, his three years' patience. 3. It hath also abused his labour, his pains, his care, and pro-

vidence of protection and preservation: for he hedges his vineyard, and walls it about. Cumber ground, all these things thou abusest. He waters his vineyard, and looks to it night and day; but all these things thou hast abused.

Further, there are other reasons of God's displeasure; as,

1. A cumber ground is a very mock and reproach to religion, a mock and reproach to the ways of God, to the people of God, to the word of God, and to the name of religion. It is expected of all hands, that all the trees in the garden of God should be fruitful; God expects fruit, the church expects fruit, the world, even the world concludes, that professors should be fruitful in good works; I say the very world expecteth that professors should be better than themselves: but barren fig tree, thou disappointest all: nay, hast thou not learned the wicked ones thy ways? hast thou not learned them to be more wicked by thy example? (but that is by the by.) Barren fig tree, thou hast disappointed others, and must be disappointed thyself: 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?'

2. The barren fig tree takes up the room where a better might stand; I say, it takes up the room, it keeps so long as it stands where it doth, a fruitful tree out of that place, and therefore it must be cut down. Barren fig tree, dost thou hear, because the Jews stood fruitless in the vineyard, therefore, saith God, Matt. xxi. 33—41, 'The kingdom of heaven shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation that shall render him their fruits in their season.' The Jews for their barrenness were cut down, and more fruitful people put in their room. As Samuel also said to barren Saul, 1 Sam. xv. 21, 'The Lord hath rent the kingdom from thee, and hath given it to thy neighbour who is better than thou;' the unprofitable servant must be cast out, must be cut down, Matt. xxv. 27.

Cumber ground, how many hopeful, inclinable, forward people, hast thou, by thy fruitless and

unprofitable life, kept out of the vineyard of God? For thy sake have the people stumbled at religion; by thy life have they been kept from the love of their own salvation. Thou hast been also a means of hardening others, and of quenching and killing weak beginnings. Well, barren fig tree, look to thyself (thou wilt not go to heaven thyself, and them that would, thou hinderest;) thou must not always cumber the ground, nor always hinder the salvation of others: thou shalt be cut down, and another shall be planted in thy room.

3. The cumber ground is a sucker; he draws away the heart and nourishment from the other trees. Were the cumber ground cut down, the other would be more fruitful; he draws away that fatness of the ground to himself, that would make the other more hearty and fruitful. 'One sinner destroyeth much good,' Eccl. ix. 18.

The cumber ground is a very drone in the hive, that eats up the honey that should feed the labouring bee; he is a thief in the candle, that wasteth the tallow, but giveth no light; he is the unsavory salt, that is fit for naught but the dung-hill. Look to it, barren fig tree.

And he answering, said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well; and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down, ver. 8, 9. These are the words of the dresser of the vineyard, who, I told you, is Jesus Christ; for he made intercession for the transgressors. And they contain a petition presented to an offended justice, praying, that a little more time and patience might be exercised toward the barren cumber ground fig tree.

In this petition there are six things considerable.

1. That justice might be deferred: 'Lord, let it alone,' &c. a while longer. 2. Here is time prefixed, as a space to try if more means will cure a barren fig tree. 'Lord, let it alone this year also.' 3. The means to help it are propounded, 'until I shall dig about it, and dung it.' 4. Here

Is also an insinuation of a supposition, that by thus doing, God's expectation may be answered: 'and if it bear fruit, well.' 5. Here is a supposition that the barren fig tree may yet abide barren, when Christ hath done what he will unto it; 'and if it bear fruit,' &c. 6. Here is at last a resolution. that if thou continue barren, hewing days will come upon thee: 'and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.'

But to proceed according to my former method by way of exposition.

Lord let it alone this year also. Here is astonishing grace indeed! astonishing grace, I say, that the Lord Jesus should concern himself with a barren fig tree; that he should step in to stop the blow from a barren fig tree! True, he stopped the blow but for a time; but why did he stop it at all? Why did he not fetch out the axe? Why did he not do execution? Why did not he cut it down? Barren fig tree, it is well for thee that there is a Jesus at God's right hand, a Jesus of that largeness of bowels, as to have compassion for a barren fig tree, else justice had never let thee alone to cumber the ground as thou hast done. When Israel also had sinned against God, down they had gone, but that Moses stood in the breach, Exod. xxxii. 10, 'Let me alone,' said God to him, 'that I may consume them in a moment, and I will make of thee a great nation.' Barren fig tree, dost thou hear? Thou knowest not how oft the hand of Divine Justice hath been up to strike, and how many years since thou hadst been cut down, had not Jesus caught hold of his Father's axe. Let me alone, let me fetch my blow, or, 'Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?' Wilt thou not hear yet, barren fig tree? Wilt thou provoke still? Thou hast wearied men, and provoked the justice of God: 'And wilt thou weary my God, also?' Isa. vii. 13.

Lord, let it alone this year. Lord, a little longer! let us not lose a soul for want of means. I will try, I will see if I can make it fruitful; I will

not beg a long life, nor that it might still be barren, and so provoke thee. I beg for the sake of the soul, the immortal soul; Lord, spare it one year only, one year longer, this year also; if I do any good to it, it will be in little time. Thou shalt not be wearied with waiting; one year and then.

Barren fig tree, dost thou hear what a striving there is between the Vinedresser, and the Husbandman for thy life? 'Cut it down,' says one; 'Lord, spare it,' saith the other: It is a cumber ground, saith the Father: One year longer, prays the Son: 'Let it alone this year also.'

Till I shall dig about it, and dung it. The Lord Jesus by these words supposeth two things, as causes of the want of fruit in a barren fig tree, and two things he supposeth as a remedy.

The things that are a cause of want of fruit, are,
1. It is earth-bound. Lord, the fig tree is earth-bound. 2. Want of warmer means, of fatter means.

Wherefore, accordingly he propoundeth,

1. To loosen the earth: to dig about it.

And then to supply it with dung: 'To dig about it, and dung it. Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it.' I doubt it is too much ground-bound: 'the love of this world and the deceitfulness of riches,' (Luke, xiv.) lie too close to the roots of the heart of this professor. The love of riches, the love of honours, the love of pleasures, are the thorns that choke the word; 1 John, ii. 15, 16, 'For all that is in the world, the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eye, and the pride of life, are not of the Father, but enmity to God;' how then (where these things bind up the heart) can there be fruit brought forth to God? Barren fig tree, see how the Lord Jesus, by these very words, suggesteth the cause of thy fruitlessness of soul. The things of this world lie too close to thy heart; the earth with its things have bound up thy roots; thou art an earth-bound soul, thou art wrapped up in thick clay. 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him;' how then can

he be fruitful in the vineyard! This kept Judas from the fruit of caring for the poor, John, xii. 6. This kept Demas from the fruit of self denial. 2 Tim. iv. 10. And this kept Ananias and Sapphira his wife from the goodly fruit of sincerity and truth, Acts, v. 5, 10. What shall I say? 'These are foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition: for the love of money is the root of all evil,' 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. How then can good fruit grow from such a root, the root of all evil? 'Which while some covet after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' It is an evil root, nay, it is the root of all evil; how then can the professor that hath such a root, or a root wrapped up in such earthly things as the lusts, and pleasures, and vanities of this world, bring forth fruit to God?

Till I shall dig about it. Lord, I will loose his roots, I will dig up this earth, I will lay his roots bare; my hand shall be upon him by sickness, by disappointments, by cross providences; I will dig about him until he stands shaking and tottering, until he be ready to fall; then, if ever, he will seek to take faster hold. Thus, I say, deals the Lord Jesus oftentimes with the barren professor; he diggeth about him, he smiteth one blow at his heart, another blow at his lusts, a third at his pleasures, a fourth at his comforts, another at his self conceitedness: thus he diggeth about him; this is the way to take bad earth from the roots, and to loosen his roots from the earth. Barren fig tree, see here the care, the love, the labour, and way, which the Lord Jesus, the dresser of the vineyard, is fain to take with thee, if haply thou mayest be made fruitful.

Till I shall dig about it, and dung it. As the earth, by binding the roots too closely, may hinder the trees being fruitful, so the want of better means may be also a cause thereof. And this is more than intimated by the dresser of the vineyard: 'Until I shall dig about it and dung it.' I

will supply it with a more faithful ministry, with a warmer word, I will give them pastors after mine own heart; I will dung them. You know dung is more warm, more fat, more hearty, and succouring matter, than is commonly the place in which trees are planted.

‘I will dig about it, and dung it;’ I will bring it under a heart awakening ministry; the means of grace shall be fat and good: I will also visit it with heart awakening, heart warming, heart encouraging considerations; I will apply warm dung to his roots; I will strive with him by my Spirit, and give him some taste of the heavenly gift, and the power of the world to come. I am loath to lose him for want of digging. ‘Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it.’

And if it bear fruit, well. And if the fruit of all my labour doth make this fig tree fruitful, I shall count my time, my labour, and means, well bestowed upon it; and thou also, O my God, shalt be therewith much delighted; for thou art gracious, and merciful, and repentest thee of the evil which thou threatenest to bring upon a people.

These words, therefore, inform us, that if a barren fig tree, a barren professor, shall now at last bring forth fruit to God, it shall go well with that professor, it shall go well with that poor soul: his former barrenness, his former tempting of God, his abuses of God’s patience and long suffering, his mispending year after year, shall now be all forgiven him. Yea, God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, will now pass by and forget all, and say, Well done at the last. ‘When I say to the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if he then do that which is lawful and right, if he walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity, he shall surely live, he shall not die,’ Ezek. iii. 3.

Barren fig tree, dost thou hear? the axe is laid to thy roots, the Lord Jesus prays God to spare thee: Hath he been digging about thee? Hath

he been dunging of thee? O barren fig tree, now thou art come to the point: if thou shalt now become good; if thou shalt, after a gracious manner, suck in the gospel dung, and if thou shalt bring forth fruit unto God, well; but if not, the fire is the last; fruit, or the fire, fruit, or the fire. barren fig tree: 'If it bear fruit, well.'

And if not, then after that, thou shalt cut it down. The Lord Jesus, by this *if*, giveth us to understand, that there is a generation of professors in the world that are 'incurable, that will not, that cannot repent, nor be profited by the means of grace; a generation, I say, that will retain a profession but will not bring forth fruit: a generation that will wear out the patience of God, time and tide, threatenings and intercessions, judgments and mercies, and after all will be unfruitful.

O the desperate wickedness that is in thy heart! Barren professor, dost thou hear? the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee; there is an *if* stands yet in the way. I say, the Lord Jesus stands yet in doubt about thee, whether or no at last thou wilt be good, whether he may not labour in vain; whether his digging and dunging will come to more than lost labour: 'I gave her space to repent, but she repented not,' Rev. ii. 21. I digged about it, I dunged it; I gained time, and supplied it with means; but I laboured here in vain, and spent my strength for naught and in vain. Dost thou hear, barren fig tree? there is yet a question, Whether it will be well with thy soul at last?

And if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down. There is nothing more exasperating to the mind of a man, than to find all his kindness and favour slighted; neither is the Lord Jesus so provoked with any thing, as when sinners abuse his means of grace: if it be barren and fruitless under my gospel, if it turn my grace into wantonness, if, after digging and dunging, and waiting, it yet remains unfruitful, I will let thee cut it down.

Gospel means, applied, is the last remedy for a

barren professor : if the gospel, if the grace of the gospel will not do, there can be nothing expected, but cut it down.

'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! Therefore your houses are left unto you desolate,' Matt. xxiii. 37, 38. Yet it cannot be but this Lord Jesus, who at first did put a stop to the execution of his Father's justice, because he desired to try more means with the fig tree : I say, it cannot be, but that a heart so full of compassion as his is, should be touched, to behold this professor must now be cut down, Luke, xix 41, 42, 'And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace ! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

After that thou shalt cut it down. When Christ giveth thee over, there is no intercessor, or mediator ; no more sacrifice for sin ; all is gone but judgment, but the axe, but 'a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries,' Heb. x. 26—28.

Barren fig tree, take heed that thou comest not to these last words, for these words are a give-up, a cast-up, a cast-up of a cast-away ; 'after that, thou shalt cut it down.' They are as much as if Christ had said, Father, I begged for more time for this barren professor ; I begged until I should dig about it, and dung it ; but now, Father, the time is out, the year is ended, the summer is ended, and no good done. I have also tried with my means, with the gospel, I have digged about it ; I have laid also the fat and hearty dung of the gospel to it, but all comes to nothing. Father, I deliver up this professor to thee again, I have done, I have done all, I have done praying, and endeavouring ; I will hold the head of thine axe no longer : take him into the hands of justice, do

justice, do the law, I will never beg for him more. 'After that, thou shalt cut it down.' 'Wo unto them when I depart from them,' Hos. ix. 12. Now is this professor left naked indeed, naked to God, naked to Satan, naked to sin, naked to the law, naked to death, naked to hell, naked to judgment, and naked to the gripes of a guilty conscience, and to the torment of the worm that never dies, and to that fire that never shall be quenched, Heb. xii. 25, 'See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.' From this brief pass through this parable, you have these two general observations.

1. That even then when the justice of God cries out, I cannot endure to wait on this barren professor any longer; then Jesus Christ intercedes for a little more patience, and a little more striving with this professor, if possible he may make him a fruitful professor: 'Lord, let it alone this year also, until I shall dig about it, and dung it; and if it bear fruit, well,' &c.

2. There are some professors whose day of grace will end with, Cut it down, with judgment; when Christ by his means, hath been used for their salvation.

The first of these observations I shall pass, but shall briefly speak to the second, to wit:

That there are some professors whose day of grace will end with, Cut it down, with judgment, when Christ by his means, hath been used for their salvation.

The apostle, in chap. iii, to the Hebrews, tells us, that the people of the Jews, after a forty years' patience, and endeavour to do them good by the means appointed for that purpose, their end was to be cut down, or excluded the land of promise, for their final incredulity: 'so we see they could not enter in, because of unbelief.' Wherefore, saith he, 'I was grieved with that generation, and said, they do always err in their hearts, and

they have not known my ways; so I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.' As who should say, I would they should have entered in, and for that purpose I brought them out of Egypt, led them through the sea, and taught them in the wilderness, but they did not answer my work or designs in that matter; wherefore they shall not, I swear they shall not: 'I swear in my wrath, they should not enter into my rest!' Here is cutting down with judgment. So again, he saith, 'As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest; although the works were finished from the foundation of the world,' Heb. iv. 4, 5. This word *if* is the same with *they shall not* in the chapter before. And where he saith, 'Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world,' he giveth us to understand, that what preparations soever are made for the salvation of sinners, and of how long continuance soever they are, yet the God-tempting, God-provoking, and fruitless professor, is like to go without a share therein; 'although the works were finished from the foundation of the world, Jude 6, 'I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not, and the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' Here is an instance to purpose, an instance of men and angels: men saved out of the land of Egypt, and in their journey toward Canaan, the type of heaven, (cut down,) angels created and placed in the heavens in great estate and principality; yet both these, because unfruitful to God in their places, were cut down, the men destroyed by God, (for so saith the text,) and the 'angels reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, to the judgment of the great day.'

Now, in my handling of this point, I shall discourse of the cutting down, or the judgment here

denounced, as it respecteth the doing of it by God's hand immediately, and that too with respect to his casting them out of the world; and not as it respecteth an act of the church, &c. And as to this cutting down, or judgment, it must be concluded, that it cannot be before the day of grace be past with the fig tree; but according to the observation, there are some professors whose day of grace will end with, cut it down: and according to the words of the text, Then, after that, 'thou shalt cut it down.' After that, after all my attempts and endcavours to make it fruitful, after I have left it, given it over, done with it, and have resolved to bestow no more days of grace, opportunities of grace, and means of grace upon it, then, *after that*, thou shalt cut it down.

Besides, the giving up of the fig tree is before the execution. Execution is not always presently upon the sentence given; for after that a convenient time is thought on, and then is cutting down: and so it is here in the text. The decree, that he shall perish is gathered from its continuing fruitless quite through the last year, from its continuing fruitless at the end of all endeavours: but cutting down is not yet, for that comes with an afterward: 'Then, after that, thou shalt cut it down.'

So then, that I may orderly proceed with the observation, I must lay down these two propositions:

Prop. 1. That the day of grace ends with some men before God takes them out of this world.

Prop. 2. The death, or cutting down of such men, will be dreadful. For this 'cut it down,' when it is understood in the largest sense (as here indeed it ought,) it showeth, not only the wrath of God against a man's life in this world, but his wrath against him, body and soul; and is as much as to say, 'Cut him off from all the privileges and benefits that come by grace, both in this world, and that which is to come.'

But to proceed. The day of grace ends with

some men before God taketh them out of the world. I shall give you some instances of this.

1. I shall instance Cain. Cain was a professor Gen. iv. 3, a sacrificer, a worshipper of God; yea the first worshipper that we read of after the fall but his grapes were wild ones, Gen. iv. 5, 8. His works were evil; he did not do what he did from true gospel motives; therefore God disallowed his work. At this his countenance falls; wherefore he envies his brother, disputes him, takes his opportunity, and kills him. Now in that day that he did this act, were the heavens closed up against him; and that himself did smartingly and fearfully feel, when God made inquisition for the blood of Abel. 'And now, cursed,' said God, 'shalt thou be from the earth; which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand,' &c. Gen. iv. 8—14. 'And Cain said, My punishment is greater than I can bear. Mine iniquity is greater than that it may be forgiven. Behold thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth, and from thy face shall I be hid.' Now thou art cursed, said God. Thou hast driven me out this day, saith Cain, and from thy face shall I be hid: I shall never more have hope in thee, smile from thee, nor expect mercy at thy hand. Thus therefore Cain's day of grace ended; and the heavens, with God's own heart, were shut up against him; yet after this he lived long, Gen. iv. 10. Cutting down was not come yet; after this he lived to marry a wife, ver. 17, to beget a cursed brood, to build a city, (and what else I know not,) all which could not be quickly done. Wherefore Cain might live after the day of grace was past with him, several hundreds of years.

2. I shall instance Ishmael, Gen. xvii. 25, 26. Ishmael was a professor, was brought up in Abraham's family, and was circumcised at thirteen years of age, Gen. xvi. 12. But he was the son of the bond-woman, he brought not forth good fruit; he was a wild professor. For all his religion, he would scoff at those that were better

than himself. Well, upon a day his brother Isaac was weaned, at which time his father made a feast, and rejoiceth before the Lord, for that he had given him the promised son; at this Ishmael mocked them, their son, and godly rejoicing. Then came the Spirit of God upon Sarah, and she cried, 'Cast him out, cast out this bond woman and her son; for the son of this bond woman shall not be heir with my son, with Isaac,' Gen. xxi. 9—11. Now Paul to the Galatians, (iv. 29—31,) makes this casting out to be, not only a casting out of Abraham's family, but a casting out also from a lot with the saints in heaven. Also Moses giveth us a notable proof thereof, in saying, that when he died, he was gathered to his people, Gen. xxv. 17, his people by his mother's side, for he was reckoned from her, the son of Hagar, the son of the bond woman. Now she came of the Egyptians, Gen. xxi. 9. So that he was gathered when he died, notwithstanding his profession, to the place that Pharaoh and his host were gathered to, who were drowned in the Red Sea; these were his people, and he was of them, both by nature and disposition, by persecuting as they did. But now, when did the day of grace end with this man? Observe, and I will show you. Ishmael was thirteen years old when he was circumcised, and then was Abraham ninety years old and nine, Gen. xvii. 24—26. The next year Isaac was born, so that Ishmael was now fourteen years of age. Now when Isaac was weaned (suppose he sucked four years,) by that account, the day of grace must be ended with Ishmael, by that time he was eighteen years old, Genesis, xxv. 12, &c. For that day he mocked, that day it was said, Cast him out, and of that casting out, the apostle makes what I have said. Beware ye young barren professors. Now Ishmael lived a hundred and nineteen years after this, in great honour with men. He also begat twelve princes, even after his day of grace was past.

3. I shall instance Esau, Gen. xxv. 27, &c. Esau also was a professor, he was born unto Isaac, and

circumcised according to the custom. But Esau was a gamesome professor, a huntsman, a man of the field; also he was wedded to his lusts, which he did also venture to keep, rather than the birthright. Well, upon a day, when he came from hunting, and was faint, he sold his birthright to Jacob, his brother. Now the birthright, in those days, had the promise and blessing annexed to it, Yea, they were so entailed in this, that the one could not go without the other; wherefore the apostle's caution is here of weight, Heb. xii. 16, 17, Take heed, saith he, 'lest there be among you a fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat, sold his birthright; for ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.' Now the ending of Esau's day of grace is to be reckoned from his selling of his birthright: for there the apostle points it, lest there be among you any that, like Esau, sells his birthright: for then goes hence the blessing also.

But Esau sold his birthright long before his death. Twenty years after this Jacob was with Laban, Gen. xxxi. 41, and xxxii. 8, and when he returned home, his brother Esau met him. Further, after this, when Jacob dwelt again sometime with his father, then Jacob and Esau buried him. I suppose (Gen. xxxv. 28, 29,) he might live above forty, yea, for aught I know, above fourscore years after he had sold his birthright, and so consequently had put himself out of the grace of God.

Three things I would further note upon these three professors.

1. Cain, an angry professor, Ishmael, a mocking one, Esau, a lustful, gamesome one. Three symptoms of a barren professor. For he that can be angry, and that can mock, and that can indulge his lusts, cannot bring forth fruit to God.

2. The day of grace ended with these professors at that time when they committed some grievous sin. Cain's, when he killed his brother; Ishmael's,

when he mocked at Isaac, &c. &c.; and Esau's, when, out of love to his lusts he despised and sold his birthright. Beware, barren professor, thou mayest do that in half a quarter of an hour, from the evil of which thou mayest not be delivered for ever and ever

3. Yet these three, after their day of grace was over, lived better lives, as to outward things than ever they did before. Cain, after this, was lord of a city, Gen. iv. 16, 17, Ishmael was, after this, father of twelve princes, Gen. xxv. 16, and Esau, after this, told his brother, I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast to thyself, Gen. xxxiii. 8, 9. Ease and peace, and a prosperous life in outwards, is no sign of the favour of God to a barren and fruitless professor; but rather of his wrath, that thereby he may be capable to treasure up more wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Let this much serve for the proof of the first proposition, namely, That the day of grace ends with some men before God takes them out of this world.

Now then, to show you, by some signs, how you may know that the day of grace is ended, or near to ending, with the barren professor, and after that thou shalt cut it down.

First, He that hath stood it out against God, and that hath withstood all those means for fruit, that God hath used for the making of him (if it might have been) a fruitful tree, in his garden, he is in this danger; and this indeed is the sum of the parable. The fig tree here mentioned was blessed with the application of means, had time allowed it to receive the nourishment; but it outstood, withstood, overstood, all, all that the husbandman did, all that the vine dresser did.

Signs of being past grace. But a little distinctly to particularize in four or five particulars.

First sign, The day of grace is like to be past, when a professor hath withstood, abused, and worn out God's patience; then he is in danger;

this is a provocation; then God cries, 'Cut i down.' There are some men that steal into a profession, no body knows how, even as this fig tree was brought into the vineyard, by other hands than God's; and there they abide lifeless, graceless, careless, and without any good conscience to God at all. Perhaps they came in for the loaves, for a trade, for credit, for a blind! or it may be to stifle and choke the checks, and grinding pangs of an awakened and disquieted conscience. Now, having obtained their purpose, like the sinner of Sion, they are at ease, and secure, saying, like Agag, 1 Sam. xv. 32, Surely the bitterness of death is past! I am well, shall be saved, and go to heaven. Thus in these vain conceits they spend a year, two, or three, not remembering that at every season of grace, and at every opportunity of the gospel, the Lord comes seeking fruit. Well, sinner, well barren fig tree, this is but a coarse beginning: God comes for fruit. What have I here, saith God? what a fig tree is this, that hath stood this year in my vineyard, and brought me forth no fruit! I will cry unto him, Professor, barren fig tree, be fruitful! I look for fruit, I expect fruit, I must have fruit, therefore bethink thyself. At these the professor pauses; but these are words, not blows, therefore off goes this consideration from the heart. When God comes the next year, he finds him still as he was, a barren, fruitless, cumber ground. And now again he complains, Here are two years gone, and no fruit appears: well, I will defer mine anger for my name's sake, Isa. xlviii. 9. I will defer mine anger for my praise; I will refrain from thee, that I cut thee not off—as yet. I will wait, I will yet wait to be gracious. But this helps not, this hath not the least influence upon the barren fig tree. Tush, saith he, here is no threatening. God is merciful, he will defer his anger, Isa. xxx. 18; he waits to be gracious, I am not yet afraid. Oh! how ungodly men, that are at unawares crept into the vineyard, how do they turn the grace of our God into

lasciviousness! Well, he comes the third year for fruit, as he did before, but still he finds but a barren fig tree; no fruit. Now, he cries out again, O thou dresser of my vineyard, come hither; here is a fig tree hath stood these three years in my vineyard, and hath at every season disappointed my expectation; for I have looked for fruit in vain. Cut it down, my patience is worn out, I shall wait on this fig tree no longer.

And now he begins to shake the fig tree with his threatenings: fetch out the axe. Now the axe is death, death therefore is called for: Death, come smite me this fig tree: and withal the Lord shakes this sinner, and whirls him upon a sick bed, saying, Take him, Death, he hath abused my patience and forbearance, not remembering that it should have led him to repentance, and to the fruits thereof. Death, fetch away this fig tree to the fire, fetch this barren professor to hell. At this Death comes with grim looks to the chamber, yea, and Hell follows with him to the bedside, and both stare this professor in the face, yea, begin to lay hands upon him, one smiting him with pains in his body, with head-ache, heart-ache, back-ache, shortness of breath, fainting qualms, trembling at joints, stopping at the chest, and almost all the symptoms of a man past all recovery. Now, while Death is thus tormenting the body, Hell is doing with the mind and conscience, striking them with its pains, casting sparks of fire in thither, wounding with sorrows, and fears of everlasting damnation, the spirit of this poor creature; and now he begins to bethink himself, and to cry to God for mercy, Lord, spare me; Lord, spare me! Nay, saith God, you have been a provocation to me these three years. How many times have you disappointed me? How many seasons have you spent in vain? How many sermons and other mercies did I of my patience afford you? but to no purpose at all. Take him, Death. O! good Lord, saith the sinner, spare me but this once: raise me but this once. Indeed I have been a bar-

ren professor, and have stood of no purpose at all in thy vineyard; but spare! O spare this one time, I beseech thee, and I will be better. Away, away, you will not; I have tried you these three years already; you are naught; if I should recover you again, you would be as bad as you was before. (And all this talk is while Death stands by.) The sinner cries again, Good Lord, try me this once, let me get up again this once, and see if I do not mend. But will you promise me to mend? Yes indeed, Lord, and vow it too; I will never be so bad again, I will be better. Well, saith God, Death, let this professor alone for this time; I will try him awhile longer; he hath promised, he hath vowed, that he will mend his ways. It may be he will mind to keep his promises. Vows are solemn things; it may be he may fear to break his vows. Arise from off thy bed. And now God lays down his axe. At this the poor creature is very thankful, praises God, and fawns upon him, shows as if he did it heartily, and calls to others to thank him too. He therefore riseth, as one would think, to be a new creature indeed. But by that time he hath put on his clothes, is come down from his bed, and ventured into the yard or shop, and there sees how all things are gone to sixes and sevens, he begins to have second thoughts, and says to his folks, What have you all been doing? How are all things out of order? I am I cannot tell what behind hand; one may see if a man be but a little to a side, that you have neither wisdom nor prudence to order things. And now, instead of seeking to spend the rest of his time to God, he doubleth his diligence after this world. Alas! all must not be lost; we must have provident care. And thus, quite forgetting the sorrows of death, the pains of hell, the promises and vows which he made to God to be better, because judgment was not (now) speedily executed, therefore the heart of this poor creature is fully set in him to do evil.

These things proving ineffectual, God takes hold

of his axe again, sends death to a wife, to a child, to his cattle. 'Your young men have I slain, and taken away your horses,' Amos, iv. 9, 10. I will blast him, cross him, disappoint him, and cast him down, and will set myself against him in all that he putteth his hand unto. At this the poor barren professor cries out again, Lord, I have sinned; spare me once more, I beseech thee. O take not away the desire of mine eyes: spare my children, bless me in my labours, and I will mend and be better. No, saith God, you lied to me last time, I will trust you in this no longer: and withal he tumbleth the wife, the child, the estate, into a grave.

At this the poor creature is afflicted and distressed, rends his clothes, and begins to call the breaking of his promise and vows to mind, he mourns and prays, and like Ahab, a while walks softly, at the remembrance of the justice of the hand of God upon him. And now he renews his promises; Lord, try me this one time more, take off thy hand and see; they go far that never turn. Well, God spareth him again, sets down his axe again. Many times he did deliver them, but they provoked him with their counsels, and were brought low for their iniquities, Psalm cvi. 43, now they seem to be thankful again, and are as if they were resolved to be godly indeed. Now they read, they pray, they go to meetings, and seem to be serious a pretty while, but at last they forget. Their lusts prick them, suitable temptations present themselves! wherefore they turn to their own crooked ways again, Psalm lxxxviii. 34, 26. When he slew them, then they sought him, and returned early after God; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and lied unto him with their tongue.

Yet again, The Lord will not leave this professor, but will take up his axe again, and will put him under a more heart searching ministry, a ministry that shall search him, and turn him over and over; a ministry that shall meet him. Elijah met with

Ahab, in all his acts of wickedness, (and now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees.) Besides, this ministry doth not only search the heart, but presenteth the sinner with the golden rays of the glorious gospel; now is Christ Jesus set forth evidently, now is grace displayed sweetly; now, now are the promises broken like boxes of ointment, to the perfuming of the whole room. But, alas! there is yet no fruit on this fig tree. While his heart is searching, he wrangles; while the glorious grace of the gospel is unveiling, this professor wags and is wanton, gathers up some scraps thereof, 'tastes the good word of God, and the power of the world to come; drinketh in the rain that comes oft upon him,' Heb. vi. 3—8: but bringeth not forth fruit meet for him whose gospel it is; takes no heed to walk in the law of the Lord God of Israel with all his heart, 2 Kings, x. 31; but counteth that the glory of the gospel consisteth in talk and show, and that our obedience thereto is a matter of speculation: that good works lie in good words, and if they can finely talk, they think they bravely please God. They think the kingdom of God consisteth only in word, not in power; and thus proveth ineffectual this fourth means also.

Well, now the axe begins to be heaved higher, for now indeed God is ready to smite the sinner; yet before he will strike the stroke, he will try one way more at last, and if that misseth, down goes the fig tree. Now this last way is to tug and strive with this professor by his Spirit. Wherefore the spirit of the Lord is now come to him: but not always to strive with man, Gen. vi. 8, yet a while he will strive with him, he will awaken, he will convince, he will call to remembrance former sins, former judgments, the breach of former vows and promises; the mispending of former days; he will also present persuasive arguments, encouraging promises, dreadful judgments, the shortness of time to repent in; and that there is hope if he come. Further, he will show him the certain-

ty of death, and of the judgment to come : yea, he will pull and strive with this sinner : but behold the mischief now lies here, here is tugging and striving on both sides. The Spirit convinces, the man turns a deaf ear to God ; the Spirit saith, Receive my instruction and live, but the man pulls away his shoulder ; the Spirit shows him whither he is going, but the man closeth his eyes against it ; the Spirit offereth violence, the man strives and resists ; they have done despite unto the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. The Spirit parleyeth the second time, and urgeth reasons of a new nature, but the sinner answereth, No, I have loved strangers, and after them I will go, Amos, iv. 6—12. At this God's fury comes up into his face ; now he comes out of his holy place, and is terrible ; now he sweareth in his wrath, they shall never enter into his rest, Ezek. xxiv. 13. I exercised toward you my patience, yet you have not turned unto me, saith the Lord. I smote you in your person, in your relations, in your estate, yet you have not returned unto me, saith the Lord. In thy filthiness is lewdness ; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I cause my fury to rest upon thee. 'Cut it down, why doth it cumber the ground ?'

The second sign that such a professor is almost (if not quite) past grace, is, When God hath given him over, or lets him alone, and suffers him to do any thing, and that without control, helpeth him not either in works of holiness, or in straits and difficulties : 'Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone,' Hos. iv. 17. 'Wo be to them when I depart from them, I will laugh at their calamities, and mock when their fear cometh,' Prov. i. 24—29.

Barren fig tree, thou hast heretofore been digged about, and dunged ; God's mattock hath heretofore been at thy roots ; gospel dung hath heretofore been applied to thee ; thou hast heretofore been strove with, convinced, awakened, made to taste, and see, and cry, O the blessedness ! thou hast

heretofore been met with under the word; thy heart hath melted, thy spirit hath fallen, thy soul hath trembled, and thou hast felt something of the power of the gospel. But thou hast sinned, thou hast provoked the eyes of his glory, thy iniquity is found to be hateful, and now perhaps God hath left thee, given thee up, and lets thee alone.

Heretofore thou wast tender; thy conscience startled at the temptation to wickedness, for thou wert taken off from the pollution of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, 2 Pet. ii. 20—22; but that very vomit that once thou wert turned from, now thou lappest up (with the dog in the proverb) again; and that very mire that once thou seemedst to be washed from, in that very mire thou now art tumbling afresh. But to particularize, there are three signs of a man's being given over of God.

1. When he is let alone in sinning, when the reins of his lusts are loosed, and he given up to them; 'And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, Rom. i. 28, 29. Seest thou a man that heretofore had the knowledge of God, and that had some awe of majesty upon him; I say, seest thou such a one sporting himself in his own deceivings, Rom. i. 30, 31, 'turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and walking after his own ungodly lusts? His judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and his damnation slumbereth not,' 2 Peter, ii. 13. Dost thou hear, barren professor? It is astonishing to see how those that once seemed sons of the morning, and were making preparations for eternal life, now at last, for the rottenness of their hearts, by the just judgment of God, to be permitted, being past feeling, 'to give themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness,' Ephes. iv. 18, 19. A great number of such were in the first gospel days; against whom Peter and Jude couple

them with the fallen angels, 2 Peter, ii. 3—8, and John forbids that prayer be made for them, because that is happened unto them that hath happened to the fallen angels that fell, Jude 5—8. 'Who, forsaking their first state, and for leaving their own habitation, are reserved in chains under everlasting darkness, unto the judgment of the great day.' Barren fig tree, dost thou hear?

1. These are beyond all mercy. 2. These are beyond all promises. 3. These are beyond all hopes of repentance. 4. These have no intercessor, nor any more share in a sacrifice for sin. 5. For these there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment.

1. Wherefore these are the true fugitives and vagabonds, that being left of God, of Christ, of grace, and of the promise, and beyond all hope, wander and straggle to and fro, even as the devil, their associate, till the time shall come to die.

2. Wherefore they are let alone in hearing. If these at any time come under the word, there is for them no God, no savour of the means of grace, no stirrings of heart, no pity for themselves, no love to their own salvation. Let them look on this hand or that, there they see such effects of the word in others as produceth signs of repentance, and love to God and his Christ. These men only have their backs bowed down alway, Rom. xi. 10; these men have only the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, to this very day, Eccles. viii. 10. Wherefore as they go to the place of the Holy, so they come from the place of the Holy, and soon are forgotten in the place where they so did; only they reap this damage, 'They treasure up wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,' Rom. ii. 3—5.

3. If he be visited after the common way of mankind, either with sickness, distress, or any kind of calamity, still no God appeareth, no sanctifying hand of God, no special mercy is mixed with the affliction. But he falls sick, and grows

well, like the beast; or is under distress as Saul, who, when he was engaged by the Philistines, was forsaken and left of God; 1 Samuel, xxviii. 4—6. 'And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem, and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him no more, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.' The Lord answered him no more; he had done with him, cast him off, and rejected him, and left him to stand and fall with his sins, by himself. But of this more in the conclusion.

These men may go whither they will, do what they will; they may range from opinion to opinion, from notion to notion, from sect to sect, but are steadfast no where, they are left to their own uncertainties, they have not grace to establish their hearts; and though some of them have boasted themselves of this liberty, yet Jude calls them wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever, Jude 13. They are left, as I told you before, to be fugitives and vagabonds on the earth, to wander every where, but to abide no where, until they shall descend to their own place, Acts, i. 5, with Cain and Judas, men of the same fate with themselves.

A third sign that such a professor is quite past grace, is, when his heart is grown so hard, so stony, and impenetrable, that nothing will pierce it. Barren fig tree dost thou consider? a hard and impenitent heart is the curse of God. A heart that cannot repent, is instead of all plagues at once; and hence it is that God said of Pharaoh, Exod. ix. 14, when he spake of delivering him up in the greatness of his anger, 'I will at this time, send all my plagues upon thy heart.'

To some men that have grievously sinned under a profession of the gospel, God giveth this token of his displeasure, they are denied the pow-

er of repentance, their heart is bound, they cannot repent; it is impossible that they should ever repent, should they live a thousand years. It is impossible for those fall-aways to be renewed again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to open shame, Heb. vi. 4—6. Now to have the heart so hardened, this is a bar put in by the Lord God against the salvation of this sinner. This was the burden of Spira's complaint; 'I cannot do it: O! Now I cannot do it.'

This man sees what he hath done, what should help him, and what will become of him, yet he cannot repent: he pulled away his shoulder before, he shut up his eyes before, and in that very posture God left him, and so he stands, to this very day. I have had a fancy that Lot's wife, when she was turned into a pillar of salt (Gen. xix. 26,) stood yet looking over her shoulder, or else with her face toward Sodom; as the judgment caught her, so it bound her, and left her a monument of God's anger to after generations.

We read of some that are seared with a hot iron, and that are past feeling; for so seared persons in seared parts are: their conscience is seared, 1 Tim. iv. 2; the conscience is the thing that must be touched with feeling, fear, and remorse, if any good be done to those whose conscience is worse than that, that is, fast asleep in sin, Ephes. iv. 19. For that conscience that is fast asleep, may yet be effectually awakened and saved; but that conscience that is seared, dried, as it were, into a cinder, can never have sense, feeling, or the least regret in this world. Barren fig tree, hearken, judicial hardening is dreadful. There is a difference betwixt that hardness of heart that is incident to all men, and that which comes upon some as a special judgment of God. And although all kind of hardness of heart, in some sense, may be called a judgment, yet to be hardened with this second kind, is a judgment peculiar only to them that perish, a hardness that is sent as a punish-

ment for the abuse of light received, for a reward of apostacy.

This judicial hardness is discovered from that which is incident to all men, in these particulars:

1. It is a hardness that comes after some great light received, because of some great sin committed against that light, and the grace that gave it. Such hardness as Pharaoh had, after the Lord had wrought wondrously before him: such hardness as the Gentiles had, a hardness which darkened the heart, a hardness which made their minds reprobate. This hardness is also the same with that the Hebrews are cautioned to beware of, (Heb. iii. 7, &c.) a hardness that is caused by unbelief, and a departing from the living God; a hardness completed through the deceitfulness of sin; such as that in the provocation, of whom God swore, that they should not enter into his rest. It was this kind of darkness also, that both Cain, and Ishmael, and Esau, were hardened with, after they had committed their great transgressions. 2. It is the greatest kind of hardness, and hence they are said to be harder than a rock, Jer. v. 3, or than an adamant, Zech. vii. 13, that is, harder than flint: so hard, that nothing can enter. 3. It is a hardness given in much anger, and to bind the soul up in an impossibility of repentance. 4. It is a hardness, therefore, which is incurable, of which a man must die and be damned. Barren professor, hearken to this.

A fourth sign that such a professor is quite past grace, is, when he fortifies his hard heart against the tenor of God's word, Job, ix. 4, &c. This is called hardening themselves against God, and turning of the spirit against him; as thus, when after a profession of faith in the Lord Jesus, and of the doctrine that is according to godliness, they shall embolden themselves in courses of sin, by promising themselves that they shall have life and salvation notwithstanding. Barren professor, hearken to this. This man is called (Deut. xxix. 18,) a root that beareth gall and wormwood, or a poisonous herb, such a one as is abominated of

God, yea, the abhorred of his soul. For this man saith, ver. 19, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination or stubbornness of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; an opinion flat against the whole word of God, yea, against the very nature of God himself: wherefore, he adds, Deut. xix. 20, 'Then the anger of the Lord, and his jealousy, shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in God's book shall lie upon him, and God shall blot out his name from under heaven.'

Yea, that man shall not fail to be effectually destroyed, saith the text; 'The Lord shall separate that man unto evil, out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant.'

He shall separate him unto evil; he shall give him up, he shall leave him to his heart; he shall separate him to that or those that will assuredly be too hard for him.

Now this judgment is much effected, when God hath given a man up to Satan, and hath given Satan leave effectually to complete his destruction: for all that are delivered up unto Satan have not, nor do not come to this end. But that is the man whom God shall separate to evil, and shall leave in the hands of Satan, to complete without fail his destruction. Thus he served Ahab, a man that sold himself to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord, 1 Kings, xxi. 25, 'And the Lord said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up, and fall at Ramoth Gilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner: And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the Lord, and said, I will persuade him, 1 Kings, xxii. 20—22, 'And the Lord said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth and be a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so.' Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail; do thy will, I leave him in thy hand, go forth, and do so.

Wherefore, in these judgments the Lord doth much concern himself for the management there-

of, because of the provocation wherewith they have provoked him. This is the man whose ruin he contriveth, and bringeth to pass by his own contrivance: 'I will choose their delusions for them; I will bring their fears upon them,' Is. lxvi. 4, I will choose their devices, or the wickednesses that their hearts are contriving of. I, even I, will cause them to be accepted of, and delightful to them. But who are they that must thus be seared? Why, those among professors that have chosen their own ways, those whose soul delighteth in their abominations.

'Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved; for this cause God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

'God shall send them.' It is a great word. Yea, God shall send them strong delusions that shall do, that shall make them believe a lie. Why so? 'That they all might be damned, every one of them who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness,' 2 Thess. v. 10—12.

There is nothing more provoking to the Lord than for a man to promise, when God threateneth; for a man to be light of conceit, that he shall be safe, and yet to be more wicked than in former days, this man's soul abhorreth the truth of God; no marvel, therefore, if God's soul abhorreth him; he hath invented a way contrary to God, to bring about his own salvation! No marvel, therefore, if God invent a way to bring about this man's damnation; and seeing that these rebels are at this point, we shall have peace; God will see whose word shall stand, his or theirs.

A fifth sign of a man being past grace, is, when he shall at this scoff, and inwardly grin, and fret against the Lord, secretly purposing to continue his course, and put all to the venture, despising the messengers of the Lord: He that despiseth Moses's law, died without mercy; of how much

sorer punishment suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God?' &c. Heb. x. 28.

Wherefore against these despisers God hath set himself, and foretold that they shall not believe, but perish: 'Behold, ye despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, which ye shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you,' Acts, xiii. 41.

Thus far we have treated of the barren fig tree, or fruitless professor, with some signs to know him by; whereto is added also some signs of one who neither will nor can, by any means, be fruitful, but they must miserably perish. Now being come to the time of execution, I shall speak a word to that also; 'After that thou shalt cut it down.' Christ at last turns the barren fig tree over to the justice of God, shakes his hands of him, and gives him up to the fire.

After that thou shalt cut it down.—Two things are here to be considered.

1. The executioner; Thou, the great, the dreadful, the eternal God. These words, therefore, as I have already said, signify that Christ the Mediator, through whom alone salvation comes, and by whom alone execution hath been deferred, now giveth up the soul, forbears to speak one syllable more for him, or to do the least act of grace further, to try for his recovery; but delivereth him up to that fearful dispensation, 'to fall into the hand of the living God,' Heb. x. 31.

2. The second to be considered, is, the instrument by which this execution is done, and that is death, compared here to an axe; and forasmuch as the tree is not felled at one blow, therefore the strokes are here continued, till all the blows be struck at it that are requisite for its felling: for now cutting time, and cutting work, is come; cutting must be his portion, till he be cut down. 'After that thou shalt cut it down.' Death, I say, is the axe, which God often useth, therewith to take the barren fig tree out of the vine-

yard, out of a profession, and also out of the world at once. But this axe is now new ground, it cometh well edged to the roots of this barren fig tree. It hath been whetted by sin, by the law, and by a formal profession, and therefore must, and will make deep gashes, not only in the natural life, but in the heart and conscience also of this professor; 'The wages of sin is death, the sting of death is sin,' 1 Cor. xv, wherefore death comes not to this man as he doth to saints, muzzled, or without his sting, but with open mouth, in all his strength; yea, he sends his first-born, which is guilt, to devour his strength, and to bring him to the king of terrors, Job, xviii. 13, 14.

But to give you, in a few particulars, the manner of this man's dying.

1. Now he hath his fruitless fruit beleaguer him round his bed, together with all the bands and legions of his other wickedness. 'His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden in the cords of his sins,' Prov. v. 22.

2. Now some terrible discovery of God is made out unto him, to the perplexing and terrifying of his guilty conscience. God shall cast upon him, and not spare; and he shall be afraid of that which is high, Job, xxvii. 22.

3. The dark entry he is to go through, will be a sore amazement to him; 'for fear shall be in the way,' Eccles. xii. 5, yea, terrors will take hold on him, when he shall see the yawning jaws of death to gape upon him, and the doors of the shadow of death open to give him passage out of the world. Now, who will meet me in this dark entry? How shall I pass through this dark entry into another world!

4. For by reason of guilt, and a shaking conscience, his life will hang in continual doubt before him, and he shall be afraid day and night, Deut. xxviii. 66, 67, and shall have no assurance of his life.

5. Now also want will come up against him; it will come up like an armed man. This is a

terrible army to him that is graceless in heart, and fruitless in life. This want will continually cry in thy ears, Here is a new birth wanting, a new heart, and a new spirit wanting; here is faith wanting; here is love and repentance wanting; here is the fear of God wanting, and a good conversation wanting: 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and art found wanting,' Dan. v. 27.

6. Together with these standeth by the companions of death, death and hell, death and devils, death and endless torment in the everlasting flames of devouring fire. When God shall come up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops, Heb. iii. 16.

But how will this man die? Can his heart now endure, or can his hands be made strong? Ezek. xxii. 14.

1. God, and Christ, and pity, have left him: sin against light, against mercy, and the long-suffering of God is come up against him, his hope and confidence now is dying by him, and his conscience totters and shakes continually within him.

2. Death is at work, cutting of him down, hewing both bark and heart, both body and soul asunder: the man groans, but Death hears him not; he looks ghastly, carefully, dejectedly; he sighs, he sweats, he trembles, Death matters nothing.

3. Fearful cogitations haunt him, misgivings, direful apprehensions of God terrify him. Now he hath time to think what the loss of heaven will be, and what the torments of hell will be; now he looks no way but he is frightened.

4. Now would he live, but he may not; he would live, though it were but the life of a bed-ridden man, but must not. He that cuts him down, sways him, as the feller of woods sways the tottering tree: now this way, then that; at last a root breaks, a heart-string, and eye-string snaps asunder.

5. And now, could the soul be annihilated, or brought to nothing, how happy would it count

itself! but it sees that may not be. Wherefore it is put to a wonderful strait, stay in the body it may not, go out of the body it dares not. Life is going, the blood settles in the flesh, and the lungs being no more able to draw breath through the nostrils, at last out goes the weary, trembling soul, who is immediately seized by devils, who lay lurking in every hole in the chamber for that very purpose: his friends take care of the body, wrap it up in the sheet or coffin; but the soul is out of their thought and reach, going down to the chambers of death.

I had thought to have enlarged, but I forbear. God, who teaches man to profit, bless this brief and plain discourse to thy soul, who yet standest a professor in the land of the living, amongst the trees of his garden. Amen.



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